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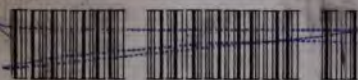
JACQUES BONHOMME

JOHN BULL ON THE CONTINENT  
FROM MY LETTER-BOX

MAX O'RELL

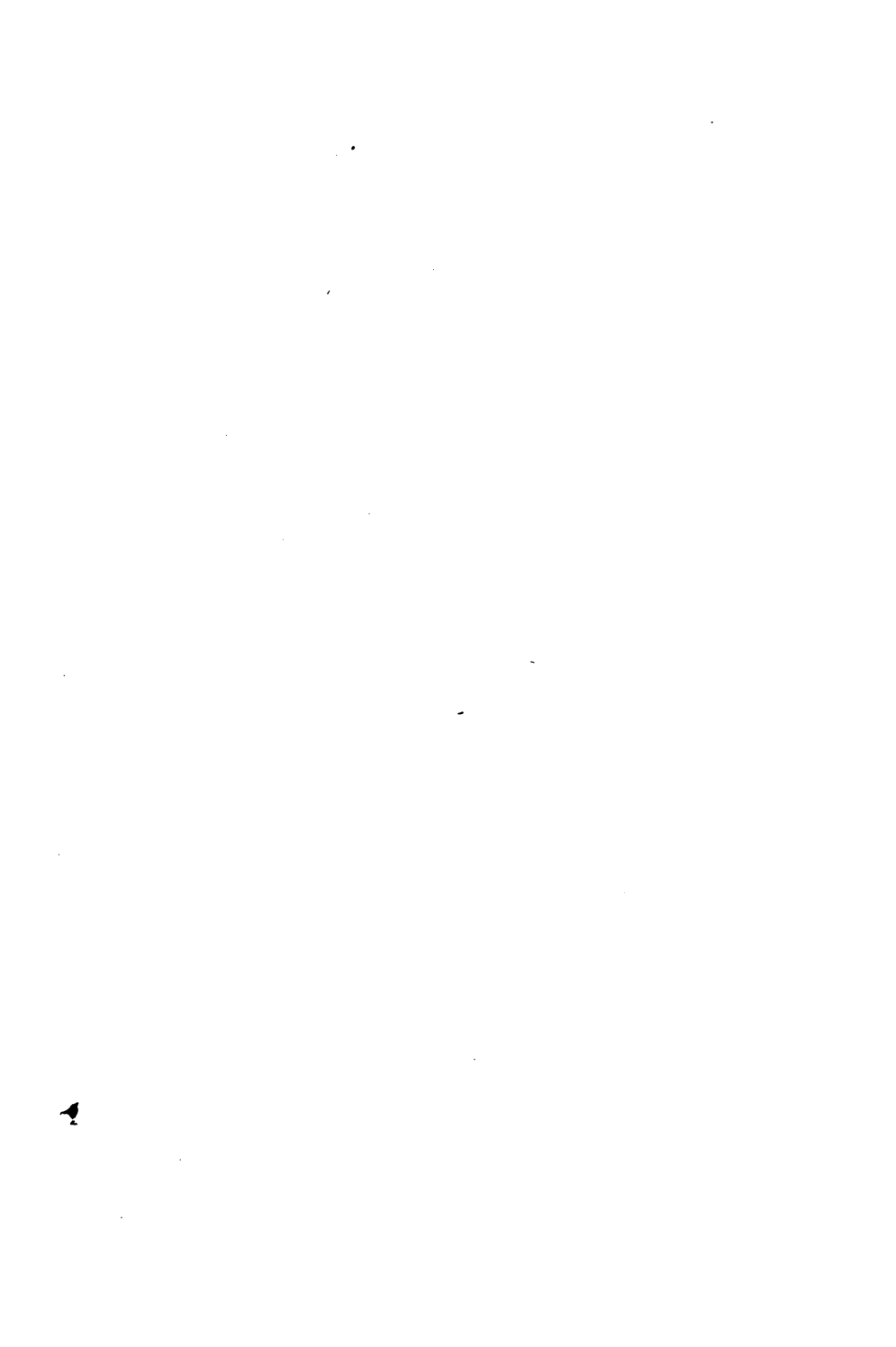
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**JACQUES BONHOMME**

**JOHN BULL ON THE CONTINENT**

**FROM MY LETTER-BOX**

BY

**MAX O'RELL**

AUTHOR OF "JONATHAN AND HIS CONTINENT," "JOHN BULL  
AND HIS ISLAND," "JOHN BULL, JUNIOR," "HER  
ROYAL HIGHNESS WOMAN," ETC.

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*If, in these few sketches of French life, I should go the length of showing a little partiality for my own country, let those of my English readers who do not love England cast the stone at me.*





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JACQUES BONHOMME.



# JACQUES BONHOMME.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE FRENCH AT SCHOOL.

School Life in France.—Well-filled Time-tables.—A Dry Polish.—Dainty Menus.—The Aristos.—The Boys at Play.—The Mixture as Before.—Popular Dessert.—Holidays.—Walks.—Sundays.—Extra Fare and Results Thereof.—Exeats.—Why Schoolboys are Revolutionary.—A State of Siege.—Surrender of the Besieged.—Punishments.—The Class-room.—Lectures and Lessons.—Studies.—The Hero of the French Schoolboy.—“Esprit de Corps.”—The Headmaster.—The Censor.—The Masters.—The Ushers.—What the Boys have been prepared for.

OUR dear parents in France are fond of telling their children that there are no days so happy in life as school-days.

After I had tasted what school life really was I can well remember that I formed a very poor idea of what awaited me beyond the school-gates.

My opinion is that when French parents have made up their minds to send a boy ten years old to



a *lycée* till he is twenty, they have sentenced him to something very near, in severity, to ten years' penal servitude.

Winter and summer the French schoolboy rises at five in the morning ; or, rather, he is supposed to do so. The first bell rings at 5 A.M., to tell him he is to get up ; a second one rings at 5.25, to inform him that in five minutes he must be down ; and a third bell, at 5.30, enjoins him to leave the dormitory. Of course he rises at 5.25, puts on his clothes with prodigious rapidity, gives himself a dry polish, *à la* Squeers, with a towel, or more often with his knuckles, and is quite ready at 5.30 to go down to the study-room. From this you will easily infer that a pint of water goes a long way in a dormitory of sixty French boys. In the study-room, under the supervision of an usher, called *pion*, and of whom I shall have more to say by-and-by, he prepares his lessons for the professors till 7.50. Breakfast is ready at eight. Considering what the *menu* of this repast consists of, I have always wondered how it could take the cook so long to get it ready. During the free ten minutes that precede breakfast time, a few boys go and have a wash. These go by the name of *aristos* (aristocrats).

The three meals of the day bear the grand names of breakfast, dinner, and supper. Breakfast consists of a plate of soup and a large piece of

bread. Most boys keep chocolate or jam, or buy some of the porter, to eat with their bread. At 8.30 they have to be in their respective class-rooms with their masters. The class lasts two hours, after which they return to the study-room to prepare until twelve for the afternoon class. From twelve to one they dine and play. Both these words would convey to an English mind a meaning that it has not in French.

The dinner generally consists of stews and vegetables swimming in mysterious sauces. The bread is *ad libitum*. When a boy has finished his piece, he holds up his hand as a sign that he is ready for another. A man holding a basket full of cut loaves is stationed in such a position as will allow him to fill all those pairs of empty hands as fast as they are put up. He flings, the boys catch; it is quite a dexterous game, I assure you. If a boy misses the piece intended for him, his neighbor not unfrequently catches and pockets it, partly as a precaution against possible pangs of hunger before the next meal, partly for the love of disobeying the rules, one of which enacts that no food shall be pocketed. The drink is called *abondance*, and is made up of a good tablespoonful of wine in a decanter of water.

As for play, it has to take place in a more or less large yard, surrounded by high walls, very much like a prison walk. Not a tree, not a blade of

grass to be seen ; a mere gravelled yard, nothing more. There the boys walk two by two, or in larger groups—the big ones talking politics, and smoking cigarettes inside their coats, while the usher is at a distance ; the little ones indulging in a game of top or marbles in one of the corners. At one o'clock they are to be in their places in the study-room till two, when it is time to go to the afternoon class, which lasts till four o'clock. On leaving the masters, to be immediately handed over to the ushers, they each receive at four a piece of bread, which they are allowed to eat in the yard with whatever relish they may possess, or wish to buy of the porter. They play till 5.30, when they return to the study-room to do their lessons for the following day. At eight o'clock supper is ready. To this, like to all their other meals, they go two by two, after having previously all formed into ranks in the yard. The supper consists of boiled beef, or a course or two of vegetables ; sometimes an apple or a few cherries, according to the season, brighten the not very festive board. In my time cherries were the most popular dessert ; after having refreshed the inner boy, it provided him with missiles, which were turned to good account on the spot, when the usher had his back turned. For drink, the mixture as before. After this frugal repast, the boys repair, two by two, to their respective dormitories. Those who care to

indulge in a little washing may do so before going to bed, so as to be clean the following day. I say "those who care," for never will an usher make a remark to a French boy over twelve (when he is no longer under the supervision of a matron) because he is dirty, not even in the refectory. Provided he has a cravat on, nobody will scold him for having a dirty neck. If cleanliness is next to godliness, the French schoolboy is most ungodly.

On Thursday he gets a holiday—that is to say, that no class is held ; but he has to be in the study-room the whole morning and evening. In the afternoon he goes for a walk. Here again an Englishman would not understand, without some explanation, what is meant by the French school-boy's walk. The college is divided into big, middle, and small boys. Each division is formed into ranks, and thus, two by two, accompanied by ushers, the boys are marched through the streets. Silence is compulsory while in town, and the ranks are not to be broken until the little battalion has reached the country. There they can play, walk, or sit on the grass, under the eyes of the ushers, for an hour or two, when the ranks are formed again, and they are marched back to what I have no hesitation in calling their barracks, not to say their prison. On Sundays, the boy who has his parents or guardian in town is allowed to go home

for the day, if he is not kept in for one of those thousand and one petty offenses invented at pleasure by the ushers and their supporters. On leaving school, on Sunday morning, he receives an *excet*, on which the hour of his departure is marked, and the parents are to write on it at what time he has reached home. He has to be back at school at 10 P.M., punctually, and again his parents have to write on the *excet* at what time he left their house. He generally returns on Sunday night in a comatose state, and the home fare tells sadly on the work he does on Mondays. He gets fewer holidays than the more fortunate British schoolboy: two months in the summer, two or three days at the beginning of the year, and a week or ten days at Easter. Such is the happy life that boys lead in French public schools. Fortunately there is a great deal of gay philosophy in the French mind, and the close friendship that springs up between the schoolboys and their *esprit de corps* help them to endure this secluded life of hardship and privation.

Now let us consider the influence this kind of life has on the French boy's character, what work he does at school, and who are the men that look after him. Shut in by the high walls of his prison, the poor French schoolboy is only too prone to compare himself to the different classes of society which he considers persecuted—that is, the inferior

classes ; and he shows his sympathy with them by adopting the ideas of an ignorant democracy, and by often expressing them in language which would be repugnant to his dignity if he were free. Poor little fellows ! When they can evade the porter's vigilance, and run across the road to buy a penny-worth of sweets, they feel like perfect heroes of romance. On their return, their schoolfellows flock round them to sniff a little of the fresh and free air that is brought inside the walls. If the young scamps are punished for their escapade, they bear it like champions of liberty who have fought for the good cause, and are looked up to by their comrades as martyrs and heroes. Under the circumstances, it is not surprising that they should now and then show a spirit of rebellion. Suppose, for instance, that some privilege which the pupils have long enjoyed and looked upon as their right has been withdrawn rightly or wrongly, no matter which. In such a case as this, English schoolboys would hold a meeting, probably presided over by one of their masters, and they would draw up a petition, which they would send to the head-master. But in French schools meetings are prohibited. What will the boys do then ? As I have described elsewhere, they will probably retire to a dormitory, there to sulk and protest *vi et armis*. They will erect barricades, lock the doors, victual the entrenchments for a few hours, and prepare for a

struggle. Rebellion has wonderful charms for them ; they are insurgents, therefore they are heroes. Don't ask them whether their cause is good or bad. This matters little ; it will be sanctified by the revolution ; the main thing is to play at the "sovereign people." These hot-headed youths will stand a siege as earnestly as if they were defending their native soil against the Prussians. Dictionaries, inkstands, boots, bedroom furniture, such are the missiles that are pressed into service in the glorious battle of liberty. But alas for youthful valor ! It all fades before the pleadings of an empty stomach ; the struggle has to be abandoned, the citadel forsaken, the arms laid down. The misguided ones are received back into the fold, to be submitted to stricter discipline than ever ; the heroic instigators of the little *fête* are in the end restored to the tender care of their mammas, or, in other words, expelled from the school.

Corporal punishment is banished from all schools in France. If a master were to strike a boy, the odds are ten to one that the boy would defend himself, and threaten the master with the first object—inkpot or book—he could lay his hand on. Boys are punished by means of long and weary impositions. If boarders, they are kept in on Sundays, and thus prevented from going home. This is a terrible punishment. When they seem incorrigi-

ble, they are expelled. And for a boy to be expelled from a French *lycée* is no light matter; for the doors of all the others are closed to him, and the Faculties may even refuse to allow him to stand as a candidate for the university degrees. His prospect in life may be ruined forever: for in France a man who is neither B.A. nor B.Sc. cannot study medicine or the law; he cannot enter the military schools, or be a candidate for any of the Government posts at home or abroad. Business is the only opening left to him.

From the time-table that I have given at the beginning, it will be easily inferred that if the French schoolboy plays less than the British one, he works much more. But with what results? The classes in French *lycées* contain from eighty to a hundred boys. They are generally composed of some ten pupils of extraordinary capacities or industry, of about twenty who follow the lectures with some profit, of twenty more who follow them anyhow, and of thirty, forty, and even sometimes fifty poor boys, neglected, forgotten, who do and learn nothing, and are mere wall-flowers. They are all promoted by seniority—that premium still given in France to stupidity, as M. Léon Say once remarked in the French Senate. I remember schoolfellows of eighteen and nineteen in the highest form who did not know their declensions. Boys may be attentive or not, as they please—that is their busi-



ness. Provided they do not disturb the peace, nothing more is required of them in the upper forms. They may even go to sleep, and the master will seldom take the trouble to wake them up. If the boy is not likely to do honor to his teaching, he does not think it worth his while to concern himself about him. With such large classes as I have described, boys cannot and do not receive individual attention from the masters, who deliver lectures to them, but certainly do not give them lessons. With the amount of work that clever and industrious boys go through, each class turns out at the end of the year at least ten splendid scholars. As for the rest, you see twenty good average boys, twenty poor ones, and from thirty to fifty hopeless ignoramuses. Each class has to go through a course prescribed by the Minister of Public Instruction, and no master has a right to read a book with his pupils, not even the passage of a book, that is not down on the ministerial programme. A professor who carried his interest in his pupils the length of introducing a new book in his class would probably have his zeal rewarded with a mastership in the college of some little out-of-the-way town in France, or perhaps in Algeria. By this governmental system of fuss and intrusion, it is not only the talent of the pupil that is stifled, but it is also the talent of the master that is hampered.

What is to be admired in French schools is that

the boys get on very well among one another. Friendship sprung up at school often lasts a lifetime.

The boys stick by each other to such a point that, rather than tell on an offender, they will all allow themselves to be punished for his offense, even though the punishment should amount to the much-dreaded detention on Sunday.

The hero of the French *collégien* is the top boy of the class—not the quickest runner or the best athlete. The dunce is the only comrade he despises. A boy who has carried off a prize at the great Sorbonne examination is for him the object of an unlimited admiration, and he feels inclined to lift his cap when he passes near him.

The head of the college is called *Proviseur*. He does no teaching. He represents high authority—that is to say the Government. He is a saluting machine. He stands in the middle of the quadrangle as the boys proceed to their respective classrooms. All take off their caps as they pass before the mighty potentate. The *Proviseur* does not know personally more than ten or twenty of the thousand boys trusted to his care. The work and discipline of the college are under the supervision of a censor. The masters, most of whom are ex-scholars of the celebrated *Ecole Normale Supérieure*, are eminent men, but they never mix with the boys out of school hours. They are much respected by

their pupils, in whom admiration for talent is innate. The ushers, or *pions*, are mere watch-dogs. They see that the boys are silent in the study-rooms, the refectory, and the dormitory. They are ignorant, ill-bred outcasts, whom the boys despise from the bottom of their hearts.

When a French boy leaves school at nineteen, he is supposed to be prepared for a public part.

## CHAPTER II.

## THE FRENCH AT WAR.

Jacques Bonhomme's Love for his Army.—The Regiment.—Sapeurs.—Drummers and Buglers.—The Band.—Character of the Instrumentalists.—Variations on "William Tell."—The Colonel.—Typical Officers.—The Utility of the German Language.—Knowledge of Geography.—A General who believes he is Retreating.—A Recipe for Preventing Sore Feet.—Non-commissioned Officers.—The Corporal.—Pitou, the French Tommy Atkins.—His Life and Character.—Hibernianism in French Barracks.—Philosophy and Good-humor of the French Soldier in War-time.

JACQUES BONHOMME does not love his army as John Bull loves his.

John gives ovations to his soldiers, showers decorations on their heads when they return home from a little expedition that will enable him to publish a new map with one more little corner marked in red; but, as I remarked in *John Bull and his Island*, if he goes to a public place of entertainment, and meets a soldier in uniform there, away he hurries, exclaiming, "This place is not respectable; soldiers are admitted!" In the singular the warrior loses all his prestige.

Very different are the feelings of Jacques towards his army. He loves it in the singular because his boy belongs to it (every Frenchman has to serve in the army). In the plural, however, it represents authority, and he is well aware that the army is ready for use as a police force in case he should ever be tempted to make his voice heard too loudly in demanding a reform. This is why French soldiers in their different garrison towns live a life apart. They do not mix with the people, and have to put up with "Coventry."

The French army is viewed through many spectacles. The Conservatives see in it the preservers of order ; the Radicals a danger to the liberties of the nation ; the League of the Patriots call it the Hope of France. To the French Mary Jane, it is the repository of tender sentiments ; to the tradesman of the garrison town, a source of income. Ball-giving ladies like it because it provides them with dancers who are as ornamental as useful, though the officer's uniform is no longer the gorgeous dress it was in my time, when a lieutenant's full uniform cost from a half to a whole year's pay. French girls have a deep conviction that no man can make love like a young lieutenant ; but Papa was always apt to frown on him, knowing that this Romeo had generally more gold on his shoulders than in his waistcoat-pocket, and that, according to the army regulations, no

officer might marry a lady with less than 30,000 francs *dot*.

But here comes the regiment. Let us open the window and have a look at the "Children of France," as Béranger called them.

In front march the *sapeurs*, with their long, bushy beards covering their chests. Look at one and you will see them all. *Sapeurs* are all alike; to be able to tell one from another is a proof of marvelous perspicacity. Under the Empire the *sapeurs* used to march with large white leather aprons covering their chest and legs, hatchets over their shoulders, and huge busbies on their heads; and they formed an imposing-looking body. The aprons are now done away with, but the hatchets are retained. Most of the officers' orderlies were taken from this part of the regiment, and it was a pleasant sight to see one of these good fellows, who are mostly middle-aged, fatherly looking men, with his apron on, leading about the children of some married officer, who made use of him as a dry-nurse (not so *dry* either, for we still say in France "to drink like a *sapeur*"). These big, kind, bearded nurses have always been favorites with their little charges, and are great at telling stories, long stories full of *sez ee, sez she (qui dit, quelle dit)*, ending in the heroine's marrying a general. The office of the *sapeurs* being to precede the regiment

and clear away all obstacles that could impede its march, the hatchet was originally a very important part of their accouterment. But in these days virgin forests are not plentiful in Europe, the high-roads are excellent, and the colonel prefers to use them ; so that now the chief utility of the formidable tool is to chop wood to make the pot boil.

Next come the drummers and buglers. How martial they look with their heads high, every head turned to the right and every bugle parallel, making the air resound with their fanfares ! They are very popular with the soldiers. It is the buglers who, with their stirring notes, cheer the men when they show signs of flagging on a long, weary march. I have seen them at the foot of a steep hill, tired, perhaps, with hours of marching. "Sound the charge," says the colonel, and immediately, as if by magic, the limp legs and backs straighten, and the column of men step out bravely, singing to the notes of the bugle :

" Il y a la goutte à boire là-haut,  
Il y a la goutte à boire."

The summit of the hill reached, the *goutte* is dispensed by the *Cantinière*, and generally takes the form of a small glass of brandy, which in time of peace has to be paid for at the rate of a penny the glass. The bugler has no need to pull out his purse ; every trooper is ready to treat him. Those

of the men who have seen active service can never forget how those same notes that have just cheered them up the hill nerved them when they had to charge the enemy, and know that in many a terrible battle, when the enemy's guns did their deadly work too well, one or two surviving buglers have bravely cheered on the diminished ranks to the last, and perhaps turned the fortune of battle.

Next to the buglers comes the band. The appearance of the bandsmen is not particularly martial; the uniform is a little bit *négligé*. We are in the presence of artistes now.

Why the trombone should be the oldest member of the band I have never been able to discover; but it is a fact that he is, nine times out of ten, a gray-headed, spectacled man, with a grave expression and three stripes on his sleeves. He feels the weight of his responsibility. It is all very well for the clarionet to take life lightly; if he plays a note a little flat, it passes in the general hum of the music without any disastrous consequences; but a wrong note from the trombone is awful to think of! So he looks neither to right nor left, and never loses sight of his majestic instrument. As a man who only plays accompaniments, the trombone is modest, and seems to apologize for the noise he makes.

The cornet plays solos, and the applause he has won from the public in the *place d'armes* has made



him vain. Holding his instrument in the air, he is not only seen and heard, but can see the effect he produces. He is young and good-looking, waxes his moustache, and is a perfect lady-killer. Cornet-players, like tenors, are conceited.

The flute is reserved. The habit of casting down his eyes on his tiny instrument has made him bashful.

The clarinet is a picture of misery. With head bent down, he looks like a plaintive philosopher giving utterance to his sad views of life.

The masher of the band is the hautboi. His uniform is unimpeachable, and more than once the colonel has frowned on him for showing too much white collar. He gives private lessons in town.

The ophicleide is funereal. His general expression is one of solemnity. The only time his face lights up at all is when he has to play the "Prayer of Moses" as a solo. That is his triumph.

The bandmaster ranks with the quartermaster. In his numerous leisure hours he composes variations on the principal airs of "William Tell" and "Norma"—a thankless task, seeing that these airs of Rossini and Bellini are good enough for most people in their original form. But it is his pride to see his name on a programme in company with these great ones, and so he works away at his

"Airs from 'William Tell,' arranged (deranged?) by N——, bandmaster of the 42d Light Foot." Just as every English chemist has composed a special tooth-powder, every French bandmaster has composed an arrangement of "William Tell."

Here comes the colonel on horseback. He looks sad and careworn. No wonder, exclaims Jules Noriac, three thousand men to manage, and the variations on "William Tell" to hear every day at dinner.

I pass over the lieutenant-colonel and the chief of squadron to have the pleasure of introducing to you a few subalterns, the non-commissioned officers, and the French Tommy Atkins, who is called "Pitou" by his compatriots.

The married officer keeps to himself, and does his best to keep his wife at home. French susceptibilities, in barracks especially, are soon wounded, and he wants to avoid the possibility of quarrels that might arise from the dear ladies' tattle. He does wool-work in his spare moments, and looks forward to the time when he will be able to retire on his pension. He is a peace-loving man. In the army matrimony is the grave of glory.

The serious officer is the one who looks for promotion. He is a soldier by profession and by vocation. He studies tactics and military history, and practices fencing, shooting at targets, swimming, and all athletic sports. He has the cam-

paigns of Napoleon at his fingers' ends. You will always see him poring over maps. He studies geography and the German language. He is of opinion that when the French can all speak German, the Prussians will have a hard time.

As to geography, he is quite right ; the knowledge of it is indispensable to the officer. The following anecdote of the Franco-Prussian war will serve as an illustration of it. A general—no less important a man than General Ducrot—had made a sortie from Paris and crossed the river Seine. Presently, as he advanced, he came to a river. Being ignorant of the meanders of the Seine in the environs of Paris, he asked :

“ Have we already come to the river Marne ? ”

“ No, general ; this is the Seine,” replied one of the staff-officers near him.

“ By Jove ! ” exclaimed the general, “ but then we are retreating ! ” (*Tableau.*)

The officer of fortune is the one who has not got any—and runs into debt. Give him a wide berth ; he is the bully of the regiment, very quick to take offense, and over-ticklish on the point of honor.

The officer who has risen from the ranks is very popular with the soldiers, whose wants he knows much better than do the young lieutenants fresh from the military school. His messmates say “ he is not a gentleman.” He is, however, a good soldier, and a trusty, straightforward man. It is true

that his manners are not refined. He can speak very fair French, but prefers bad language, and can swear for a quarter of an hour without using the same oath twice. I remember, during the Franco-Prussian war, I happened to be quartered for a day in an aristocratic household in Lorraine with a lieutenant of this type. Trembling at the thought of my worthy friend's unruly member, I seated myself at our host's dinner-table. All went well until the conversation unluckily fell upon military marches, when the lady of the house wanted to know whether the feet did not suffer very much with such a quantity of walking to do every day in the hot weather.

"I'll tell you what, ma'am," said he, "you must never wash the feet. I never do. Grease them well with tallow, and they'll be all right."

The lady wished she had not spoken.

Later on there was a whist-party formed in the drawing-room, and my comrade was asked if he would make a fourth at a little table where three old whist-players were already seated, ready to enjoy their favorite game.

"With pleasure, I'm sure," said he, comfortably installing himself in the empty chair,—“only I must tell you I never played before.”

The face of the old gentleman opposite, as he looked at him over his spectacles, was a study.

The sergeant-major is pretentious. He will tell

you that if he were a civilian he could occupy a position that very few officers would be able to fill. When he retires to private life he boasts of having been a sergeant-major.

The corporal, to be seen in all his glory, must be studied when he has a written report to make to the colonel. He is a good fellow, who rules four men, and defies all rules of grammar. His spelling is phonetic ; yet he loves long words, and his reports bristle with such words as *nevertheless*, *notwithstanding*. He is regarded by his four men as an authority on elegant diction. He pronounces French in a marvelous way, using imaginary consonants at the end of his words. For *peu-à-peu* he will say *peu-la-peu* or *peu-za-peu*, and tell his men that both are French, but that "the second is more elegant." A private may be able to spell, but a corporal never—such is the deep-rooted belief of all French officers. I was present one day when a corporal came to the doctor with one of his men who was unfit for the saddle. The doctor examined him, and found him suffering from rheumatism. The corporal proceeded to fill up the requisite form for the man's admission to the nearest military hospital.

"Can you spell *rheumatism*, corporal?" said the doctor.

"I think I can, doctor, thank you," replied he, saluting.

That corporal was Louis Coetloyon, one of the leading journalists of Paris, who had volunteered soon after the outbreak of the war. We had a good laugh over the incident when I told the doctor of his blunder.

"What business has he to be a corporal if he can spell?" exclaimed the surgeon, who was a little bit sorry for what had happened.

Pitou serves his country for the modest sum of two *sous* a day. He receives one *sou* cash, and the other is placed to his credit until his term of service is over, when he is presented with a sum representing as many *sous plus* interest as he has spent days in the army. Of course his pay is not often his only source of revenue. Many soldiers work at some trade inside the barrack, and those who come from the middle classes are well supplied with pocket-money from home—even the peasant's son is sure to receive a little help every month. He rises at five in the morning, and as there is no food served before eight, he goes straight to the canteen and has his *petit verre* (a tablespoonful of brandy). He tosses it at one draught, drains the dregs out in his palms and touches up his hair with it.

Great fraternity prevails in the barracks. If there are any empty pockets, their owners are not allowed to go short. He who received a little P.O.O. yesterday is always ready to pay. The

poor fellow who has nothing but his *sou* a day is never left out either, and not one of his comrades who treat him would think of alluding to his inability to return their kindness. He is drilled eight hours a day. At 8 A.M. and 4 P.M. he has his *gamelle* containing a piece of beef, cooked and served in a good, thick soup of vegetables. This savory and nourishing repast is eaten with bread, and forms his only food in time of peace. How often during the war, when the officer's dinner was but a dream, have I relished a dish of this appetizing compound brought me by my good orderly!

I cannot relate here the thousands of jokes that the barracks have furnished, and will always furnish, to the French comic papers. But I cannot refrain from mentioning the curious fact that one finds Hibernianism common among the ranks, while not to be found elsewhere in France. I remember one bull that Paddy might be proud to have perpetrated.

Pitou, ordered by a corporal to dig a pit and bury a quantity of rubbish from the yard, is in trouble. He has performed his task, but there is no room in the pit for all the mold which was dug out to make it; so he comes to his corporal to ask what he shall do.

"You fool," said the corporal magnificently, "make the pit larger, of course."

In war time the French soldier is admirable. The good-humor with which he goes through the greatest hardships is simply wonderful. If the provisions are not at hand, he breakfasts off a joke or a song. The only thing that puts him out is to get short weight when the rations of bread, rice, coffee, sugar, and salt are served out. He always goes straightway and weighs them, to make sure he has his due, and if there is a deficiency of the tenth of an ounce he will grumble all day ; but if his rations are right, he is right, ready for anything the day may bring, merry as a lark. His philosophical way of taking the inevitable, and putting a good face on personal misfortune, is proverbial. At the battle of Wörth, one of my men had his right hand completely shot away by a shell. Seeing the poor fellow look at his maimed arm as he was being carried away, I went to him and gave him a word of sympathy.

"Ay, *mon lieutenant*," he cried, "I shall have to learn to make cigarettes with one hand !"

The whole character of the French soldier is there.



## CHAPTER III.

## THE FRENCH IN LEADING-STRINGS.

Good Society.—Where to go to Obtain Observation.—The Causerie.—Women of Taste and Culture.—Women's Sovereignty.—The Bourgeois' Wife : her Ways and Shrewdness.—Are French Women Frivolous ?—Mothers.—The Shopkeeper's Wife.—Sound Partnership.—A Lesson in Politeness.—The Peasant Women.—Industrious Habits.—Genius of Economy.—Who made the Suez Canal ?—The French Women Redeemed their Country Eighteen Years Ago.

THE national character of the French has greatly altered since the disasters of 1870, and no one need wonder at it. They have become more susceptible ; they are now the most sensitive people on earth.

The rage for equality is often manifested by a ferocious jealousy of those who rise, either in literature, the fine arts, or politics. All these are failings that we possessed before the Franco-German war, but in a much lesser degree.

What has not changed, fortunately, is the character of the French women—I mean especially the women of the people.

Good society is much alike everywhere—like hotels ; it is a question of more or less manners in the former, of more or less fleas in the latter. Good society in France is no exception to the rule. No more are the hotels—far the contrary. But what is there to be learned in what is termed “high society” except gossip from club smoking-rooms and from boudoirs, which might, perhaps, furnish a few pages of *Scandalous Chronicle* ? It is the people who preserve the traditions of a country; therefore it is the middle classes, the working classes in town and country, that the observer must turn to. If you wish to study the manners of any nation, take third-class tickets. There is little or nothing to be picked up in a first-class carriage.

That the French women of the upper classes are the leaders of fashion all over the world, everybody knows ; but I cannot pass them over without dwelling upon the reason why our best men are still at the feet of our women.

“If I were queen,” said Madame Récamier one day, “I would command Madame de Staël to talk to me all day long”; and a contemporary of this celebrated authoress relates how he and some friends of his were driving with her one day, and were suddenly surprised by a violent storm bursting over their heads without their having noticed a sign of its gathering, so absorbing were the

charm and vivacity of her conversation. There are plenty of French women of whom similar things might be said. From the seventeenth century they have continued to hand down this charming sovereignty of converse. Mother bequeaths it to daughter, or it is transmitted in the blood ; and, to my mind, this is what chiefly distinguishes them from the women of other countries. In spite of telegraph and railways, in spite of politics, which in these days absorb all ranks of French society, people still *causent* in France ; and this, thanks to French women. Excuse me for using the word *causer*, but you have no equivalent for it in English. *Chat* is perhaps the nearest approach to it, but even that fails to render its meaning. A *causerie* is marked not only by interest of subject, but also by a lightness of touch which the French language eminently lends itself to.

It is true that here and there you will come across a French woman bitten with new-fangled notions, discoursing of politics, the moral and intellectual progress of the people, social emancipation, and other tedious topics : but such black sheep are rare ; the great majority are content to play their natural part, to be the ornaments of society, to bring to social intercourse the tact, grace, and harmony which form its chief redeeming points, and without which life would become, if not insupportable, very near akin to that of the savages.

Can you imagine a drawing-room attractive without the presence of ladies? Have you never noticed that, left to themselves, the most clever men fall into argumentation? that their oratory fails to interest or convince you, and that there is a general feeling of coldness and restraint? But let a woman come in, a woman of taste, and gayety comes with her; conversation becomes animated and attractive. It runs gracefully from one subject into another, like a butterfly from spray to spray. It touches each lightly, rises to high thoughts, comes to earth again, passing from lofty to lowly subject, from grave to gay, with infinite meanders. Every one is moved to show himself at his best, and draws from his vocabulary his choicest expressions, his happiest reflections, surpasses himself, and is surprised to find himself inspired as by a muse. Just now they were killing time; now every one is enjoying himself. All constraint is gone; each one gives free expression to his thoughts. In a word, just now they were talking; now they *causent*. And in taking leave of their hostess they might repeat the expression that a certain courtly *abbé* of the eighteenth century used in speaking to a *grand dame* who had communicated to him something of her irresistible spirit: "Madame, I am but an instrument, on which you have played with skill."

So much for the French women of the upper classes.

Now let us pass on to the different working-classes of society. There, too, we find woman's sovereignty indisputable, and the men in leading-strings. In the French household the woman is queen. Her empire over her children is perfect, and she leads her husband by the nose. He does not complain of this ; on the contrary, he enjoys it, and he thinks that, after all, much worse might happen to him. The wife knows all her husband's affairs, and when he has a few savings to invest he does not think it beneath him to ask her advice. She knows, as well as he, the current price of stocks at the Bourse ; and if he should be seized with a pruriency to embark in speculation, she brings to bear all her influence over him to induce him to buy Consols or any other Government securities. Call on her husband on business, and if he is from home you will not need to make a second visit on that account ; she has all the affairs of the firm at her finger's end.

She is the goddess of economy and order.

Every little *bourgeoise* keeps a memorandum-book, in which she writes down all her expenses. Nothing is forgotten, not even the halfpenny to the blind beggar who plays the flute at the street-corner.

The French woman has a genius for cookery,

and is thoroughly awake to the fact that it is good policy in married life to see that Monsieur dines well. I believe you have a saying in England that the way to a man's heart is through his stomach ; but I fancy there are many English women who do not use this pathway as much as they might.

The politics of matrimony is a science inborn in our women. Let a French woman be rich or poor—the mistress of a mansion in the Champs Elysées, or of a poor fifth-floor little flat at Montmartre or Batignolles—she has always the charm of feminality. She is always smart, always alert, and has a little fluttering, bustling way with her that is bound to keep awake your interest in all she does. She may be sometimes a little affected, but she is never vulgar. On Sundays and holidays she dresses still a little more elegantly than usual, but she never appears to be in Sunday clothes. The middle class French woman is ladylike, not only in her dress, but in her speech. You will never see her loaded with cheap jewelry, this great stamp of vulgarity ; and when she speaks to you, you cannot guess whether she is the wife of a gentleman or of a small tradesman.

Notice that she often changes the style of her hair. That is because she knows that love lives on trifles, and that the best dishes become insipid if they are always served with the same sauce. Even if her stock of clothes is scanty, her clever brain

and fingers help her to cover its deficiencies by constant little changes. With two or three dresses in her possession, the dear little humbug will make you believe that she has a well-filled wardrobe.

I have often in England heard French women called frivolous. But this is the height of absurdity, and, in my quality of Frenchman, surely I ought to be as good a judge of the point as the English tourist. How can French women, who are perhaps, of all women in the world, the most initiated into the affairs of their husbands, be frivolous? If frivolity consists in trying to remain young and attractive as long as possible without becoming ridiculous, then the French *bourgeoise* is frivolous. If, again, frivolity consists in making a home cheerful and gay, and preventing a husband from being absorbed by the cares of business, then she is frivolous. But this is nonsense. Is she frivolous, this woman who is the friend and confidante of her husband — who, in important matters as well as in the smallest, has both a consultative and deliberative voice in the household? It is she who knows, with her economy and good management, how to face the danger when, from one cause or another, the family revenue diminishes; it is she who knows, with her energy, how to ward off ruin from her threshold. If this woman were frivolous, how could you explain the adora-

tion for the mother which, even to the lowest of the low, you find in French children? How could this be, unless she were the example of all domestic virtues? If a Frenchman of forty would hesitate to take an important step in life without first consulting his mother, surely it must be that he recognizes in her a wise guide. It would be mere naïveté on my part to dwell longer on this absurd charge of frivolity.

Take now the shop-keeping classes. There you will see the wife the active partner of her husband. Behold them both as the commercial traveler displays his goods on the counter. The wife is supreme. Her objections are without appeal, her opinion final. It is she who generally has charge of the books and the cashbox, and neither books nor cash were ever entrusted to better guardianship. She is not a mere housekeeper, with or without wages; she is the partner, not merely a sleeping partner. This not only enables her to be of great help to her husband, but it also enables her, if she happens to become a widow, to carry on the business without her husband, to be independent, and to bring up her children. She has not, to obtain her living on her husband's death, to become a working housekeeper or a nurse; she is the mistress of her own house as before, and now the head of the firm. In her shop she is most polite and *empresée*, but never servile; and if you



wish her to take you for a gentleman, don't keep your hat on while you are engaged with her in a commercial transaction.

I have still present in my memory the following little anecdote :

A well-dressed man once entered a perfumer's shop where I was purchasing a pair of gloves. Keeping his hat on all the time, he addressed the perfumer's wife in a most offhand manner. But what exasperated the dear woman was that, after inquiring about the price of some score of articles, he prepared to retire, saying :

"He didn't think he wanted anything."

"I think you do," replied the woman, who was not to be wholly without a revenge ; "you want a few lessons in politeness, at all events."

It is said that Louis XIV., the most haughty and magnificent monarch of modern times, used to lift his hat even to the female servants of his court. If so, no man need think that he derogates from his dignity by keeping his hat off in a respectable shop when he is served by a woman.

I might say a word or two on the drawbacks of the influence of women on Frenchmen ; but there is no doubt that this influence has polished our manners.

You cannot obtain a perfect notion of French industry unless you pay a visit to our peasantry.

I must say that now the woman ceases to be attractive. She does not even attempt to look so. Sunburnt, hale and hearty, behold her, dear English tourist, that is the fortune of France. She does not wear fringes on her forehead, I will admit ; she does not wear flounces on a second-hand skirt, or a hat with flowers and feathers, and she totally ignores shilling diamonds. She has a coarse serge gown on and simple snowy cap. She is clean and tidy, and the personification of industry. I do not doubt, however, that thanks to the blessings of gratuitous and compulsory education, the time will soon come when she will want to imitate the ladies of the town in her habits and dress ; and that her sons will despise the dear land where they were born, and will all want to be clerks, and swagger in town with high stand-up collars, tight trousers, and sticks. Thank goodness, this sickening spectacle is not yet to be seen in France !

This good, hard-working, thrifty woman is the backbone of the country. The amount of work she can get through is simply prodigious. You will always see her busy, either working in her field, selling the produce of her little farm in the market-place of the nearest town, or engaged about her little household. Whether she takes her cow to the field, or is on her way to town ; whether she is sitting behind her wares waiting for customers, or in a railway station waiting for

her train, look at her fingers busy on a pair of stockings. She does not know what it is to be idle for a single moment. She has never left her dear village, and for her the world is made up of her "three acres and a cow." But she has got them, and, thanks to her frugal habits and splendid management, her family can live and thrive on them. She is not attractive, but she is a picture of health and contentment. Shares and bonds may go up or down without disturbing her peace; she holds none. She trusts her savings to nobody. Bankers, she thinks, company directors and stock-brokers, may be very respectable persons; but when the old stocking is swollen with five-franc pieces, she rounds off her little family domain and buys a new field—something she is quite sure to find in its place when she wakes up in the morning. Her daughter goes into service, and makes a capital servant. Like her mother, she thinks but of one thing—saving her wages. She does not get a new hat every month to get photographed in it; she puts her money in the savings-bank.

Let me give you an example of her frugality, and allow me to take it from a personal recollection. My mother has a housemaid who has been with her twenty-five years. Not long ago, while in France, I took aside this old servant:

"I know how devoted you have been to my mother," I said to her. "You are not strong,

and I dare say you will not wish to go into service again ; but make yourself easy about this. If anything should happen to my mother, I shall see that you are comfortable for the rest of your life. But," I said inquiringly, " I have no doubt you have something of your own by this time ? "

Imagine my surprise when I heard her tell me she had saved over 10,000 francs, all well invested, including one share in the Suez Canal Company !

Since I have mentioned the Suez Canal, why should I not take the opportunity for trying to explain the uneasiness that was some time ago created in France by the British policy in Egypt ? You must bear in mind that the Suez Canal was not made by big capitalists. It was made by the savings-bank of France—by the " old stockings " ; that is to say, by the small *bourgeois*, the working people and the servants. When we reflect that the riches of France derive, from the economy imposed upon every French household by the women, I might even say that the Suez Canal is the work of the French women. This canal is essentially a national enterprise, and the least French mechanic will tell you "*we* have made the Suez Canal." You will find very few French families possessing so many as ten shares. They are spread all over the country. Well, let a few

unscrupulous journalists attempt to prove to the people that the English want to annex or *protect* Egypt in order to seize on the Suez Canal, and you will easily imagine the effect. What a pity it seems that nations can only talk to other nations through their political press ! What a pity it is that the British people cannot let their French neighbors know in plain words that they admire them for the gigantic work they have made, and that they will never dream of being connected with the Suez Canal otherwise than as good customers to help them get good dividends !

These same women of France did something grander than this. It was they who redeemed their beloved country, and paid off the Prussian eighteen years ago.

## CHAPTER IV.

## THE FRENCH IN LOVE.

The Bump of Amativeness.—Bashful Lovers.—Love in Silence.—Poetical Effusions.—Wild Oats.—A Plunge.—Mésalliance.—The Great Step.—Old Bachelors in Love.—Homœopathic Treatment for Love-sickness.—Gallantry.—Flirtation. — Courtship. — Love-letters. — Declarations of Love.—How an Aristocratic French Lady was Saved by a Wart.—Matrimony.—The Civil and Religious Ceremonies.—The Wedding Festivities.—Tears and Joys.—Honeymoon.—Courtship in Matrimony.—Old Customs.—The Dames of the Garter.—Happy at Last.

THERE is probably no being in whom the bump of amativeness is more developed than it is in the Frenchman. The poor fellow must love ; he cannot help it.

At twelve years of age he is deeply in love with a little girl he has met with her mamma in one of the public gardens of the town, and to whom he prettily lifts his hat before beginning a game of ball or hide-and-seek. He does not declare his love. In the distance he throws rapturous kisses at "her"; when near he casts down his eyes and looks silly. He dreams that his little lady-love is being carried off by some miscreant, that he comes

to her rescue, saves her, throws himself at her feet, and declares himself her slave forever.

At fifteen, he loves a portly matron of some forty summers, to whom he sends anonymous verses. He loves in silence once more. Like Fortunio, in Alfred de Musset's celebrated comedy, he loves too much to say whom he loves, and would die without telling her name.

From eighteen to twenty he loves public characters. Actresses have drawers full of poetical effusions addressed to them by the upper forms of our public schools.

At twenty—well, at twenty, the less we speak of what he loves the better. *Il faut que jeunesse se passe*, say the French as an excuse. The best excuse, however, that can be advanced in his favor is that his education, as I have attempted to explain in another chapter, does not prepare him for manhood. Indeed, the French boy's change from youth to manhood is like a shooting of rapids. He has never known what it is to be free; how can he be expected, as a rule, to make good use of liberty the first time he is thrown into the world? The break is sudden, a plunge that often threatens a capsize.

From twenty to twenty-five he seldom marries. When he does, he often makes a *mésalliance*. He has noticed a pretty little milliner passing every day at the same place. He has admired her; by-

and-by he follows her, proposes matrimony, and marries her. The parents at first grumble, will have nothing to do with the young couple for some time, and generally relent on the arrival of the first baby.

As a rule, the Frenchman does not marry before he has reached the age of thirty. From thirty to thirty-five is the age at which he takes the great step.

Old bachelors are not impervious to Cupid's darts. You often see Frenchmen entering the holy estate for the first time at fifty or sixty. Their decided love for good cookery and white linen frequently beguiles them into marrying their cook or laundress. These are the brides often led to the altar by retired officers, and installed in apartments in some suburb of Paris.

The Frenchman has his characteristic feature in common with men of all countries : each time that he loves, it is for ever. When crossed in love, he seldom goes the length of committing suicide. He does not go in for such extreme measures : he generally prefers resorting to homœopathy ; he loves "another." Like cures like : *similia similibus curantur*.

Flirtation is not a French pastime. A few married women may indulge in it ; but girls, what-



ever may be said to the contrary, very seldom do. A woman who flirted would pass in France for giddy, not to say fast; she knows her countrymen too well for that. She is aware, when she coquettes with them, what she is exposing herself to.

If French girls felt inclined for a little flirtation, how could they indulge in it? Good Heavens! What would her mother and father say if they saw her taking a walk by herself during the day—if it came to their knowledge that a young man had actually dared to whisper words of love into her ear before he had laid bare his heart and made a clear statement of his finances to them in the first place? Even when he has obtained consent of the parent, and his visits to the house where his *fiancée* resides are permitted, the young couple are not allowed to see each other even for a moment without the presence of a third party; and the little intimacies and endearments which in England are deemed harmless are in France rigorously banished and forbidden. The pleasant operation familiar to English lovers by the term of "spooning" is absolutely unknown to courtship as practiced in France. What would you think of the young lady in Victorien Sardou's comedy of *Les Vieux Garçons*, who, finding herself alone with her lover—a lover to whom she is engaged to be married,—reproaches him with having ventured

into her presence when he knew that her parents were out, and that she was alone at home?

"*N'est-ce pas que c'est bon d'être ensemble !*" pleads the young man.

"*Je n'ai pas dit que ce ne fût pas bon,*" replies the young lady, in neat epigrammic style ; "*j'ai dit que ce n'était pas bien.*"

This declaration of the young girl is always received by the audience by a round of applause, intended partly, no doubt, for the nicety of M. Sardou's language, but chiefly for the very correct sentiments of the affectionate yet indignant *fiancée*.

As soon as two young French people are in love they want to die, unless their parents immediately consent to their marriage, which is very seldom the case. Well, to wish to die under these circumstances is a trifle irrational, but love and reason seldom go together. Of course they never do die. They live all the while, and are almost inclined to think that, in love matters, plain sailing is not so sweet or so romantic as obstacles to overcome. What lovely letters crossed-love suggests to them ! Letters invariably written at midnight,—French lovers never write by day,—midnight, "when all is in repose around them." Letters full of "All is known, we are lost ! What will become of us ? Ah ! forget me as soon as you can ; we shall never be each other's. As for me, I shall die of it, I

know I shall. Then you will marry another woman. I will pray in heaven for your happiness. Perhaps now and then you will come to the cemetery and lay a bunch of violets on my tomb. You know, beloved one, that violets are my favorite flowers. You wont forget that, will you? I weep, I weep, and I weep. Farewell!" And this shiver-giving letter, how to post it the following day? The poor child cannot go out alone. The housemaid is coaxed and bribed. She becomes the confidante. She posts the letter, receives the answer, and plays the part of *Mercurie galant*.

Cupid may delight in mystery, but this is not business. However, things come right in time, as we shall see presently.

When the Frenchman in love has an opportunity of making a *viva voce* declaration to the mistress of his heart, he generally sets about it in theatrical fashion. He goes down on his knee. Now, a man, except he be very young, with irreproachable features, can scarcely afford to do this; he runs a thousand risks of appearing ridiculous and showing his little defective points. While he is on his feet, that small bald spot on the top of his head is not noticeable, and the unpicturesque male attire of the nineteenth century looks well enough. But let a man who is no longer a slim Apollo get down on his knees, and pour passionate protestations to a woman with the slightest sense of the ridiculous,

and I maintain he is running a risk of killing what little tender sentiment she may have for him. His face is red, or perhaps purple, with the unwonted exertion and excitement as he warms to his subject ; out of this red face gleam two eyes that show all their white. All the time the little demon of observation may take inventory of all these blemishes. No, no ; a man should not allow a woman to contemplate him in such a servile attitude. He should not abdicate his dignity in going on his knees to implore favors that the dear fellow is probably destined to pay enough for.

All this puts me in mind of a play of Emile Augier, in which an aristocratic lady relates how she was saved from a foolish entanglement of her affections by her lover going down on his knees and declaring his passion. He had on his nose a little wart, which at ordinary times was scarcely noticeable ; but as the poor fellow grew more and more carried away by his fervor, redder and redder grew this innocent little excrescence, till at last the comicality of the thing struck her, and she could not help bursting out laughing. "That wart saved me !" she exclaims, to the delight of her lady friends on the stage and of the audience.

Let us now come to matrimony. I have already said that young people in France cannot marry without their parents' consent, and that at no mat-

ter what age. However, when a man is over twenty-five and a girl over twenty-one, they may compel their parents to give them that consent. This extreme measure is very seldom resorted to, for it has to take the form of a summons through a notary ; but relentless parents sometimes wish to receive such summonses, in order to be able one day to tell their children, in case the match should prove an unhappy one, that they wash their hands of it. As soon as the young lover is accepted by the girl's parents he is received in the family ; not, however, on terms of intimacy, as in England. He pays frequent but official visits, brings presents to the young lady, many of which afford him the opportunity of conveying to her a little *billet-doux*. The day before the wedding he brings the *corbeille* ; that is to say, a casket containing valuable presents of lace, jewelry, etc. The contract of marriage, settling money matters, is signed before a notary and in the presence of the relatives and the most intimate friends of the bride and bridegroom. As a rule, they are married by the mayor of the town on that day. The real wedding is a religious ceremony that takes place the following day in the morning.

People with a little pretension to style have for many years followed the English fashion of going away for the honeymoon as soon as the wedding

breakfast is over. But twelve or fourteen years ago such was not the practice : high and low spent their wedding-day much alike ; that is to say, as the lower middle classes still do.

This is how the eventful day is passed :

The morning is like the proverbial April one, all smiles and tears. The process of the elaborate toilet is interrupted at every moment by tender embraces. Mamma, between the pauses of the petticoats, must clasp her dear Fifine in her arms, and listen to her assurances that "she can never, never be so happy as she has been with her dear *petite mère*," at any rate not happier. But neither tears nor embraces have hindered the little white-robed figure from being decked very effectively. At last all are quite ready, and the bridegroom having arrived, the bridal party sets out for church, the bride and her father occupying the first carriage, and the bridegroom and his future mother-in-law the second. The friends follow, and in this order the little procession marches up to the altar. The service is followed by a short address to the happy pair—a sermon on matrimony by one who knows nothing about it. This being duly administered, the company proceed to the vestry, and no sooner are they there than mamma falls again on the neck of her sweet child, and again gives way to her feelings. Indeed, by this time the event is felt to be a great one all round, and one

that demands much outlet for the feelings. Everybody kisses everybody else, and there is a general chorus of felicitations. The next item in the programme is the wedding breakfast, a simple affair given in the family *appartement* to the members of the family only. If the father lives in Paris, and his purse will admit of the carriages being retained all day, the bridal party drive to the Bois de Boulogne or Vincennes to pass the afternoon ; but this time the young couple are not separated, and mamma has to hand her daughter over for the first *tête-à-tête* with Adolphe. It is awful to think of, but she has to bear it. The most festive part of the day's proceedings comes in the shape of a dinner and ball at a great restaurant. To this entertainment acquaintances to the number of a hundred or two are frequently invited. Of course, in the case of a bride taken from a home large enough to admit of it, this takes place in her parents' rooms. At midnight, when all are engaged in the whirl of a waltz, Fifine is discreetly led away from the ball-room by her mother and an old lady of standing of the family, but not before the bridegroom has had a whispered intimation of her departure from the lips of the lady who is now signed and sealed his mother-in-law.

This last part of the comedy is the most solemn of all. Arrived in the home which is to be her daughter's abode henceforth, of course the dear

soul cannot help feeling moved once more, and this time terribly. The process of the morning's toilet is reversed to the same accompaniment of tears and embraces. The honor of taking off the garter is claimed by the old lady (generally an aunt of the bride). Adolphe, punctual to the whispered rendezvous given him in the ball-room, arrives, and it is mamma who comes to open the door to him. This scene may be more easily imagined than described. The moment is awful for all concerned. The poor mother throws herself into her son-in-law's arms, and, with all the fervor of her heart, exhorts him to take care of the treasure she has handed over to him, and make her life a bed of roses. And—she goes.

Adolphe and Fifine are happy at last, and now we will take leave of them, and wish them long happiness and prosperity.

There is something to be said in favor of all this.

The ceremony of matrimony is the prologue to courtship, instead of the epilogue, as it not unfrequently is in countries where society imposes no restrictions upon engaged people.



## CHAPTER V.

## THE FRENCH AT WORK.

Jacques Bonhomme in the Good Old Times.—His Position to-day.—His Industrious Habits and Peaceful Disposition.—Militarism and Prosperity.—The Real Pretender in France.—The Paris Workman : what he is and what he ought to be.—The Politics of the Peasant and of the Paris Workman.—The Anarchists : what and who they are.—All Candidates.—Why so Many Stand for Parliament and so Few Sit in It.—The Shopkeepers.—Their Ways.—Their Aim.—French Industry.—French Officials and how they Work.

THINGS have greatly changed since that exact and most impartial observer La Bruyère drew the following picture of the French peasantry two hundred years ago. "You see," said he, "certain wild animals, males and females, about the land; dark, livid, naked, and all burnt with the sun, bound to the soil, which they dig and stir with an unflagging patience. They seem to articulate words, and when they stand up they show a human face, and, indeed, they are none other than men ; at night they retire to their dens, where they feed on black bread, water, and roots. They save other men the trouble of sowing, digging, and reaping,

and deserve not to lack of that bread which they have grown."

To-day the French peasant lives in his own cottage, cultivates his own field, and demands nothing beyond peace and fine weather. No doubt this cottage of his would appear to an English tourist to be lacking of many comforts. It is carpetless, it is true, but it belongs to him, and that makes up for many drawbacks. He is contented and rich like the rest of us, not in the things which he possesses, but in those which he knows how to do without. He is peaceful, simple, sober, and laborious. His ideal of life is the independence which is the fruit of labor and economy ; he is satisfied with very little in the days of his strength, because the prospect of eating his own bread near the door of his own cottage when his strength is gone makes him happy. So he works steadily, unceasingly, with a wife who is a true helpmate. He is no fire-eater, no dreamer of new worlds to conquer. The surging passions of great towns, bred and fed by vice and improvidence, are horrible to him. He wants to be left alone, and cries for peace at the top of his voice. So eager is he after this blessing that in 1881 his representatives in Parliament upset the first Ferry Ministry by a majority of 355 to 68 on account of the expedition to Tunis, although that expedition had been highly successful from a military point of view. In 1882 the Freycinet Min-

istry was defeated on the vote of credit which they asked to enable France to join with England in an armed intervention in Egypt. In 1885 the second Ferry Ministry was upset by a majority of 306 to 149 on account of the Tonquin expeditions. So much to show how aggressive the French nation is ! The permanently aggressive nations are the nations where the people are oppressed and wretched. Militarism is not compatible with national prosperity and happiness. The prosperity of the common people, and the use they are learning to make of liberty, are the great facts which will tend to make France a nation more and more peaceful. The French peasant might well express a wish that the government should still improve his position ; but he is quiet, and no government thinks of him particularly. If he were to make as much noise as the Paris workman, he might be listened to.

The real pretender in France is not the Comte de Paris or Prince Victor Napoleon, not the Duc d'Aumale or Prince Jerome ; the real pretender is the Paris workman. If you speak to him of "the people," it is he, and he alone, whom he supposes you mean. The millions of quiet peasants, laborers, and other rural toilers he totally ignores ; he is the "sovereign people." The Parisian workman is not satisfied with the old cry : "What is the cap-

italist? Everything. What ought he to be? Nothing." His new cry is: "What is the workman? Nothing. What ought he to be? Everything." A member of the commission appointed by the late French Parliament to inquire into the Paris workman's life, asked one of them to get up the budget of his family expenses. After describing minutely all the necessities, the workman put down, "For music halls, theaters, distractions—three hundred francs." And on the member of Parliament suggesting that the last item might, perhaps, be reduced, the Paris workman indignantly retorted: "Do you think that we are going to live like brutes?" The present House of Deputies is all occupied with the question of employers and employed, granting one by one all the demands of the latter. Nobody seems concerned about the rural population, by far the most interesting of all. How is that? Simply because the peasants do not hold stormy meetings, do not speak of erecting barricades, and are quiet, peaceful, industrious, sober, and law-abiding people. The peasant has the sun, and if his harvest is destroyed by the frost, the hail, or the drought, it is for him to make the best of it; while the Paris workman goes to the music-halls, smokes cigars, and talks politics. Suppose the country engages in war, the Paris workman assumes a uniform and sings war-songs, but the peasant sees his land laid waste and his cot-

tage burned down ; and this is why you will understand that he feels it his duty to hate the Germans in a theoretical way, but hopes and trusts that he may not live to see the day when he or his sons may be called upon to avenge the disasters of the terrible year 1870.

A great prejudice imposed upon English-speaking people on the subject of France, and one which I should very much like to destroy, is the belief in the importance of our Anarchists. This belief is kept alive by a few journalists, who love to fill their columns with the sayings and doings of French Anarchists. The Anarchists ! Well, we keep the article, as the English and Americans do, and they are about as important as theirs. France, honest, economical, hard-working, ignores them. They are no party, no power, in the state. They are not represented in our Parliament. I believe that the German Anarchists alone, of all the parties owning that generic name in Europe, have a true representation in the Legislature.

The most amusing feature at the last elections in Paris and a few other large towns was the appearance of the working-men candidates. The working-men had resolved to be represented in Parliament by their own set—that is to say, not by the real, industrious working-man, but by the heroes of a few platforms. So far there was no difficulty ;

but there was a formidable, an insurmountable one about the choice. I was present at one of their meetings. It was most amusing to see that as soon as a candidate had been duly proposed and seconded, he was immediately sat upon by the rest of the congregation. I asked my neighbor to explain such proceedings to me. His answer was satisfactory. "Why should it be *he*?" he said to me. You will understand what he meant when I have told you that on the day of the election they were all candidates. Each had one vote—his own. Each thought that he was as good as his neighbor, of course, and they would not pledge themselves to vote for one in particular; and finally they voted for journalists who advocated their claims, or even for manufacturers and landowners. As I said elsewhere, to imagine that a nation of six millions of proprietors and twenty millions of workers is revolutionary is the height of absurdity. An ation of industrious men, who naturally wish to protect the fruits of their industry, is necessarily an eminently pacific and conservative nation, and that is just what France is.

If the French are industrious, they are not so in the same way as the English. The French never, or very seldom, allow themselves to be completely absorbed by business. They always set apart a certain portion of time to the amenities of life.

They are as serious as you like at work, but in a moment they will exhibit any amount of good-humor at play, and again will resume the harness as quickly as it was thrown off. If you go into a shop at dinner-time—I speak now of the small provincial towns—you may run the risk of receiving very little attention, or even none at all.

I remember once—it was at St. Malo, in the summer—I entered a hatter's shop at one o'clock in the afternoon. A well-dressed, lady-like girl came out of the back parlor, and inquired what I wanted.

"I want a straw hat, Mademoiselle," I said.

"Oh, that's very awkward just now!"

"Is it?"

"Well, you see," she said, "my brother is at dinner"; and after a pause of a few seconds she added: "Would you mind calling again in an hour's time?"

"Not at all," I replied; "I shall be delighted to do so."

I was not only amused, but struck with admiration for the independence of that worthy hatter. After a few years' residence in England, a little scene of that description was a great treat.

An hour latter I called again. The young girl made her second appearance.

"My brother waited for you for quite ten minutes," she said to me; "he has gone to the café with a friend now."

"I am sorry for that," I said ; "when can I see him ? "

"If you step across to the café, I am sure he will be happy to come back and attend to you."

I thanked the young lady, went to the café, and introduced myself to the hatter, who was enjoying a cup of coffee and having a game of dominoes with a friend. He asked me to allow him to finish the game, which, of course, I was only too glad to do, and we returned to the shop together.

Another time, I happened to be in a little Norman town.

Having broken the glass of my watch, I inquired who was the best watchmaker in the place. It was a M. Perrin, I was told.

I made for M. Perrin's shop. The shop was closed, and the shutters up.

Outside was stuck a card, on which I read :

"M. and Mme. Perrin are out of town; they will be back on Tuesday."

It was Saturday. M. and Mme. Perrin were on the spree.

I admired their independence, and waited till they returned to have my watch repaired.

Nobody wants to know the time in Normandy, and for three days I did as my happy compatriots.

In business the Frenchman is probity itself, as



a rule, and his punctuality would almost make an Englishman smile. He may rather hamper his commerce by attention to trifles, but when he sells you something you may take it for granted it is what he represents it ; for he is jealous of his good name as a tradesman or manufacturer, and likes to hear compliments of his goods. He likes the money made out of them, of course, but that is not an absorbing point with him. He is satisfied when he has made a modest fortune, and moves on to make room for another man. So that he has enough to give his never very numerous children a sound education and a good start in life, and procure the modest comforts of life, he is content. And this is how in France you see the good things of this world more equally divided than in England. There are few colossal fortunes ; but in the provincial towns pauperism is not known as an institution, which makes up for it. I do not hesitate to affirm that not only does the small French *bourgeois* not covet wealth, but that he is almost afraid of it. He prefers comfort to luxury. He considers £300 a year a very snug income. When his government securities assure him this sum, he knocks off work, and prepares to make himself happy and comfortable for the rest of his life.

You may well imagine how amusing it is to hear sometimes that the good fellow has the reputation of being unmanageable and revolutionary.

He is so easily manageable that every time we have a new ministry he says to his neighbor :

" I see M. So-and-so is made Prime Minister : do you know who he is ? "

" Not I," answers the neighbor ; " I had never heard his name before. "

And both seemed to be concerned about the new ministry about as much as I am concerned about the ministerial crisis in the Sandwich Islands. He is so easily manageable that for peace' sake he will endure things that would rouse an Englishman to rebellion. He has the good fortune to live under a government that looks after him, and sees to all his little wants, which makes and sells him fire-proof cigars, matches that have "struck"—that is to say, which obstinately refuse to strike—and that keeps his public accounts and carries them to the fourth decimal, a luxury which costs him a good fourth of his revenue in *personnel* and red-tape, but which saves the treasury at least half a crown per annum. The centimes column is guaranteed exact by every government clerk in France, and thus it is that Frenchmen get consoled for the little errors which occasionally occur in the column of the millions. The Frenchman is kept in order by a legion of civilians in uniform, from the Prefect down to the omnibus conductor, who takes him under his protection, demands his fare with an air

of command, and sets him down at his destination as if he were a parcel. Whatever his government is, he is constantly complaining of it ; but the dear man ought to know that nations have the governments they deserve. He generally accuses his administration of doing too much for him. Well, he is quite right, but he does not attempt to do anything himself. As a clever writer on French manners said, " He is taken charge of, bag and baggage, by the government on his travels, and carefully looked after in his domicile as if he were a child." The man clothed in government uniform assumes that arrogant, not-to-be-questioned air which would send an Englishman into fits.

When you English appoint a new government official, it is another servant that you add to your household. When we French appoint a new government official, it is a new master that we give to ourselves to snub us or to bully us.

I have an interesting illustration of this.

Two young chemists (one English, the other French) were in partnership in Paris, and one day made up their minds to start afresh in Egypt. Each wrote to his consul in Cairo. The Englishman's letter ran thus :

" DEAR SIR: I am about to open business as a chemist in Cairo. Will you be good enough to tell me what are my chances of success in Egypt, and

what formalities, if any, I should have to comply with before entering upon the undertaking ?

“Yours truly,

“JOHN.”

By return post he received a most polite letter containing all the detailed information he wanted.

The young Frenchman wrote :

“MONSIEUR LE CONSUL-GÉNÉRAL: I am desirous of setting up as a chemist in Cairo. Dare I hope that you will spare a few minutes of your valuable time to give me such information and advice as you may consider likely to be of use to me? With many apologies for intruding upon you, I have the honor to be, Monsieur le Consul-Général, with greatest respect, your most obedient and humble servant,

“JACQUES.”

This letter was written four years ago. The dear fellow is still waiting for that consul's reply. Of course, his English friend is now established in Cairo, comfortable and prosperous, doing a roaring trade in pills with the new protégés of Her Britannic Majesty.

You may well imagine, I repeat it, how amused we French are when we hear certain English people speak of the “revolutionary Frenchman.” One

hears curious stories about the French in England ;  
and personally I may say that I have greatly improved my knowledge of France and her people since I have resided there.

## CHAPTER VI.

## THE FRENCH AT PLAY AND AT TABLE.

**French Cheerfulness.**—The Secret of French Happiness.—The Pleasures of the Table.—“For Goodness’ Sake, Don’t Shake the Bottle!”—A Dreadful Sin in the Eyes of the French.—Cheap Fares.—The Saucepan.—Epicures.—The Menu.—Solemn Moments.—The Choice.—Wonderful Stomachs.—Artistic Taste.—Holiday-makers.—The French Seaside.—All One Family.—The English Take their Pleasures Sadly.—The French “Get-up.”—Amusements.—The French at the Play.—The Pit and the Upper Gallery.

THE French are essentially a happy people. Their cheerfulness, which strikes the foreigner the moment he sets foot on French soil, is due to a sound stomach. Dyspepsia is not known in France. Light bread, generous wine, dainty dishes productive of good-humor, never bolted, always eaten in cool apartments or in the open air with leisure and jocularity, there lies the foundation of the Frenchman’s happiness. From the rich banker’s mansion in the Champs Elysées to the simple mechanic’s garret at Belleville, business cares are never allowed to interfere with the pleasures of the table. See the eyes sparkling with joy as the bottle fills the glasses, and the good-humored rebuke of the host

when a lady—as most French ladies will—knocks the bottle in lifting her glass to prevent its being filled to the brim. “Sapristi, Madame; say that you wont have any more, but, for goodness’ sake, don’t shake the bottle!” Or look how he frowns if he catches a guest in the act of adding water to his pet wine. “Mix this wine with water! My dear fellow, it’s a sacrilege! God will never forgive you!” There is nothing irreverent in this exclamation. He is thoroughly convinced that good wine was given to man by God to rejoice his heart; and to spoil it by adding water to it is in his eyes nothing short of a sin. A Frenchman is very poor indeed who has not in the corner of a cellar a few bottles that he has carefully tended for years, and that he brings upstairs to welcome an old friend at his table or cheer a poor neighbor on a sick-bed. Every year the French *bourgeois* promotes some hundred bottles of wine that has improved by keeping. You should see him as he gently opens the door of his cellar, and almost walks on tiptoe, for fear of shaking the ground. With very little inducement he would take off his hat; he is in his sanctuary. All his bottles are sealed and labeled. He contemplates them with a paternal eye. It was he who bottled that wine, who corked it, sealed it, labeled it, and laid it down. In the driest corner he will point out to you a dozen of bottles covered with ‘dust and cobwebs,

Not even his most intimate friend has ever tasted their contents. He bought this wine on the day that a daughter was born to him. It will be opened on her wedding-day. He knows he will require some generous wine to keep up his spirits when he has to part with his beloved daughter, who is to him as the apple of his eye.

The pleasures of the table are within the reach of all classes in France. The working-people are better off in England than in France, but they are not so well fed or so happy. They spend their money in superfluities instead of spending it in necessities. The English women of this class go in for a lot of cheap finery ; the French ones go in for sound linen. What the English working classes throw away in bones, scraps, and vegetables, would suffice to nourish a poor French family.

I assure you that with a vegetable soup, a stew, some cheese or fruit, and good bread, these people dine remarkably well at two or three pence a head.

I know of an English lady who, one day, sent by her cook a boiled chicken to a poor woman of the neighborhood who was sick. She sent it in a soup-tureen full of the broth.

The following day she went to see how her poor patient was doing, and how she had enjoyed the chicken.



Then she learned that the broth had been thrown away, the "ladies" of the place having declared that it was only dirty water.

In my eyes nothing is more edifying than to see these toilers set off on Sundays with their wives and children, for Meudon, Bellevue, Asnières, or other pretty environs of Paris, to breathe the fresh air in the woods or by the river. Here there are restaurants in plenty. Those who can afford it patronize their tables ; but at every turn you see a merry company sitting under the shade of some tree, enjoying the contents of a basket brought from home for economy's sake. The day passes gayly, and there are plenty of summer-houses to shelter from dew or cold. Here, with the aid of a bottle of inexpensive native wine, these happy folk awaken the Gallic fun that sleeps under the vest of the humblest Frenchman. No riot, no rowdyism, no drunkenness to be seen. Everybody has spent a happy day in the open air, and laid in good provision of health and spirits for the coming six days of uninterrupted work. Not only the human members of the family circle have benefited either. The family pets are often of the party, and I remember even to have seen a canary forming one of a happy group on the grass at the Vincennes Wood. "Poor little thing," said the bright-eyed girl who had brought her caged warbler from its

home in a fifth-floor flat, "it would have been so sad all day without us!"

For the upper and well-to-do classes there are in Paris a few dozen restaurants, perfect temples of Epicurus. Now see the faithful at work. They will tell you that animals feed, man eats. "But," they will add, "the man of intellect alone knows how to eat."

A little walk is taken first, to get up the appetite. Some will have their glass of absinthe or vermouth, and will tell you with the most serious air in the world that without it their appetite would never come. Punctual as the clock, when their dinner-hour arrives, behold them turn into Bignon's, the Maison-Dorée, or some other well-known house, and take their seat with the solemnity of an Academician who is going to take part in the official reception of a newly elected member of the celebrated Academy! The waiter presents the bill of fare, and discreetly retires. He knows that the study of the *menu* is a momentous affair, and that *ces messieurs* are not going to lightly choose their dishes. They must have ample time for reflection. He leaves them in sweet meditation, savoring in advance the long list of dainties for the day. This preliminary is one of the pleasantest features of the performance, something akin to the packing up for a holiday trip. Each article on the bill of fare is

discussed with endless commentaries, accompanied with knowing glance or smack of the tongue.

By and by the choice is made. One takes a bit of paper, and pencils the order for the waiter :

Consommé aux pois.  
Oysters and a sole Normande.  
Pheasant à la Sainte-Alliance.  
Chateaubriand.  
Tenderest of asparagus à l'amazone.  
Suprêmes de mauviettes.  
Ortolons à la Provençale.  
Meringues à la Vanille.  
Ice, cheese, dessert.

The wine question is very soon settled. The Frenchman is familiar with the names of all his favorite friends. Beaune, Leoville, Chateau Lafitte, Chateau Margaux will help the chosen *menu* to go down. He will sometimes order a bottle of Rhenish wine, but not without previously satisfying his patriotism by adding, "These rascally Prussians, what beautifully colored wines they grow!" Two hours, at least, are spent at table, for the whole time of the meal conversation goes on unflagging. When dinner is over, our friends repair to Tortoni, the Café Riche, or the Café Napolitain, and there sip a cup of fragrant coffee while quietly enjoying a cigar; after which, not unfrequently, a tiny glass of *fine champagne* or *chartreuse* is brought in requisition "to push down the coffee." Then they rise,

and arm in arm, smiling, gesticulating, they stroll on the Boulevards or the Champs Elysées, delighted with the world at large and with themselves in particular.

In all their pleasures the French bring to bear a certain amount of artistic feeling. See the workman when he starts a new penny clay-pipe. He will avoid sitting or standing in a draught, and will smoke gently to color it neatly, so that the black part, the *culottage*, may be perfectly regular. If he spoils it he will throw it away and start another, bestowing on it still more care than before. Whether he works or plays, he will never do anything clumsy.

I have heard English people say "that the French have always an eye for effect," in such a tone as to imply that this was a blemish in the national character.

It is true they have this eye for effect, and it is because the feeling for art, the love of the beautiful, is innate in all classes of the French people. So strong is it in the tradesman, for example, that it would never enter his head to turn out in his trap to go to the races in the stream of carriages that flows through the Bois de Boulogne on race days. Even the small *bourgeois*, who takes a cab for the journey, goes by another route so as not to spoil the show. He goes by train if he cannot walk, or he seats himself with his friends under the trees

along the route, and enjoys the pretty sight for his artist's eye by the file of smart carriages filled with gayly dressed people.

Not long ago, being in a fashionable English health-resort, I went one morning to see a meet. The pink coats and well-groomed hunters, the amazons, the hounds, all made up a bright tableau pleasant to the eye ; but, there in the midst, was a butcher's boy on his master's nag, who had joined the cavalcade, and was grinning from ear to ear at the joke of being in it—if not of it.

Now it is not that a French butcher's boy would not think himself as good as anybody else. On the contrary, his pride is stronger than the English boy's, and would not allow him to mix with the "swells" unless he could be as smart as they. This feeling and his natural repugnance to mar in the slightest degree the beauty of the scene are strong in him, and he has no taste for horse-play, the great feature of any English holiday in which the people take part.

I have often heard that the English take their pleasures sadly. I am not prepared to say that I endorse the opinion ; but I can affirm that the French have a wonderful capacity for enjoying themselves. They know how to throw off conventional restraints and give themselves up to pleasure. Take the seaside, for example. What

fine opportunities the English seem to throw away there for thorough enjoyment! On the French beaches all the holiday-makers form but one big family, as it were. The children play together without restraint. In the evening the "children of a larger growth" meet at the Casino, where, by paying a pound a month, they can enjoy good music (not German bands), have the use of billiard-rooms, smoking-rooms, reading rooms, etc., and the *entr e* of frequent balls and soir es. All mix and are happy. I have seen aristocratic ladies of the most haughty type—people who in Paris or their country homes would not think of associating with any one outside their own class—put in an appearance at these Casino balls, and dance with the first comer who asked them for a waltz or a polka. These acquaintances are made for the pleasure of the moment, and do not last. No gentleman takes advantage of such an acquaintance to go and call on the people he meets thus. Nay, more, if he meet elsewhere a lady with whom he has danced at the seaside, he puts her completely at her ease by not showing signs of recognizing her, unless she herself makes advances. If he behaved otherwise, he would immediately be stamped as an ill-bred fellow. Of course you run the risk of mixing with people whose society you would not think of frequenting at home; but when the French are out for a holiday, they have only one consideration—

that of passing the time gayly. If the women are attractive and the men agreeable, that is all you require of them for the little time you will be thrown among them.

The Englishman, who passes his time in standing sentry at the door of his dignity, is often almost bored to death at the seaside. If he have a large family, things may go very well, but imagine a man with a wife and daughter in lodgings by the sea. If a week of wet weather sets in, poor fellow, what resources has he but the local library, where the books he would like to read are generally "out, sir!" When he does find one to his taste, the pebble-stuffed sofa, or the piece of furniture his landlady facetiously calls the "easy-chair," are not precisely aids to the enjoyment of it. On the beach he looks around, and says to himself that all the people look decent enough, but there is no knowing who they may be at home. That man over there looks very jolly; but, alas! perhaps his grandfather kept a shop. It is too horrible to think of the risk one may be running by making acquaintance with him. And John Bull retires into his shell.

French beaches offer a most pretty spectacle. My dear countrymen and countrywomen never lose sight of their get-up: how they are going to look is a matter of first consideration. The costumes that she will take to the seaside are talked over for months by the French woman. But all wear

conventional dress ; this is a habit they do not seem able to throw off. No harlequin-striped jackets of gaudy colors on the men ; no economizing of ribbons on the hats of the ladies. The former greatly favor white flannel suits, white straw hats, white shoes, and white umbrellas lined with green. Ladies disport themselves in white cottons, muslins, and crêpe de Chine. Here and there are wonderful new colors, creations of Parisian fancy, "sporadic apricot," "dying flea," "bashful frog," and others equally true to nature. These eccentric hues are generally made up in eccentric fashion ; but whatever the dress is, it is worn as only a French woman can wear it. A big hat, turned down over one ear, and caught up over the other with rampant knots of ribbon, is pretty sure to crown the jaunty little figure and rather spoil its effect. The ideal is to have one or two pounds' worth of trimming on a threepenny Zulu hat. In the evening is donned the *toilette de bal* of lace or muslin, and Monsieur also appears in evening dress, accompanied by a yachting cap. This is the acme of style, the latest utterance, the latest spasm of *chic*. Two or three hours are spent in chatting, laughing, and dancing, and all go home, having thoroughly enjoyed themselves. Compare this with the German band's tooth-drawing strains, and the open-air services of the Salvation Army, or some local fanatic who tries to drown in hideous



"hymns to God" (!) the lovely music of the waves while he airs his "self-righteousness" on the English beach !

The limits of this chapter will not admit of my entering into every favorite pleasure of the French people. I would like to take you to a French soirée, and the races at Longchamps or Chantilly. But you might object to go to races on a Sunday, so it is as well that we should avoid Longchamps. And, dear reader, if your idea of going to races has been formed from a visit to Epsom, along a road swarming with costermongers' carts and rowdy holiday-makers, whose idea of fun is throwing bags of flour at passers-by, I appreciate your motive for declining to attend races on Sunday. If ever you are in Paris at the right season, do not go so far as the course if you have scruples of conscience on the subject, but sit in the Bois de Boulogne and watch the stream of handsome carriages with their elegantly dressed occupants, and you will say that we take our pleasures decently and cleanly, at any rate. Please don't take this last sentence as too severe a criticism of the Derby ; for I can assure you that I have seen on that day such wanton rowdyism that I sometimes imagine my eyes deceived me.

A few words I must say about the theater.

Theater-going is a pleasure not confined to the refined, the well-to-do, and the middle classes in France: it is a national thing, and the humblest enjoy and criticise what they see on the stage as acutely as do the occupants of the stalls and boxes. This class will enjoy not only melodramas and farces, but psychological plays. Victor Hugo relates that at the funeral of Mlle. Mars, the famous actress, he heard men in blouses and with sleeves turned up say very true and very acute things concerning the theater, art, and poetry. I have always enjoyed listening at the door of Parisian theaters to workmen making their remarks on the plays and the actors, or seeing them make themselves at home in the upper gallery. Look at them in the summer, with their coats off, eating their supper and discussing across the room the merits of the acts they have heard. Every Frenchman is an observer of human nature; and I know very few countrymen of mine who have not once or twice put on a blouse and a casquette, and taken a seat in the upper gallery. You will often hear these Paris workmen make very witty remarks. I was once present at the performance of Alexandre Dumas's *Anthony*, at the Cluny Theatre. In the last act Mlle. Duvergier faints, and has to be carried away by her lover. Mlle. Duvergier was a stout lady, and the actor seemed for a moment to be reflecting how he would set about it.

"If you can't manage it," cried an occupant of the top gallery, "make two journeys, you fool!"

The French are very strict with their actors. If a comedian's part should consist of simply having to open the door and say, "Dinner is served," he would be expected by the French public to be an actor. The Théâtre Français is not only a great playhouse, it is a great school of manners. Mothers take their daughters there to see and learn how a woman should enter a room, walk across it, bow, and sit down. How I should like to detain you over this, a great favorite subject of mine!

I must stop.

Perhaps I have succeeded in showing that the people of Paris are like the people of Athens—they may be a little frivolous, but they are intelligent and artistic.

## CHAPTER VII.

## THE FRENCH IN TROUBLE.

The Opinion of the Greatest French Jurisconsult on the Administration of Justice in France.—The Power of French Magistrates.—How the French understand Democracy.—The Examining Judge.—Inquisitorial Proceedings.—Correctional Police.—Why the Bench is Occupied by Three Judges.—How Three Eye-witnesses may Prove Nothing.—A Scholar in Trouble.—Vagrancy and Police Supervision.—A Problem for Society to Solve.—The Court of Assizes.—Grand Spectacular Dramas.—Faces Never Lie.—Capital Punishment.—“Exciting Scenes at the Scaffold.”—Press Offenses.—Comfortable Quarters.—Happy Martyrs.—A Journalist’s Escape.

PRESIDENT DUPIN, the greatest French jurisconsult of the century, once said : “If I were accused of having carried off the towers of Notre Dame in my pockets, I would run away.” A more severe criticism upon our judicial procedure could not have been pronounced. But is it too severe? Could you believe, for instance, that upon the least suspicion a French magistrate may order, on his own responsibility—a responsibility which no one has a right to question,—a search or an arrest in

any private house? He may issue such a warrant upon any presumption uncorroborated upon oath.

In France we give almost unlimited arbitrary powers to a legion of magistrates, whom we expect to live in a state of independence on a salary of sixty, seventy, eighty, or one hundred pounds a year, and who are, for the most part, the failures of our Bar. I warrant that there are more judges in a French town of 50,000 inhabitants than in the whole of England—quite as many, at all events. Judicial reforms have long been demanded by the Democratic party, but none have been made; and I am bound to say that nothing excites public minds in France less than what passes in the courts of justice. When the Frenchman has paid his taxes, he thinks the government ought to see that everything is right. There are few countries, as I have said elsewhere, in which Democratic tendencies are more marked than in France. In spite of this, public opinion does not concern itself about judicial proceedings; because there is no country in which authority is less respected, although, strange to say, there is not one in which it is more feared and more easily submitted to. We seem to accept all forms of tyranny, in order to shirk all responsibility. Democracy with us chiefly consists in holding up to ridicule a despotism, the acts of which we in turn approve by holding up to ridicule those who are the victims of it.

Let us see how French justices proceed with "Frenchmen in trouble."

When, in England, a man is arrested and informed of the charge brought against him, he says, "Very well, you will have to prove it"; and the inspector at the police-station says to him, "I must caution you against making any statement—in fact, anything you may say will be used as evidence against you." When, in France, a man is accused—say, for instance, of stealing a watch—he is brought before the Commissary of Police, who invariably says to him, "You are charged with stealing a watch; the best thing you can do is to make a full confession and the judge will be lenient with you." If he is guilty, and knows that the case is clear against him, he immediately makes a clean breast of it, and, as a rule, is quickly and leniently dealt with. But if he is innocent, or, if guilty, he thinks he can get out of the scrape, he of course answers, "You are mistaken; I am not guilty," and his troubles begin. He is sent to prison, and the following day is taken before the examining judge, called *juge d'instruction*, not in public, but in a private room. There this magistrate says to him point-blank: "You say you are not guilty, of course; if we were to listen to all of you, none would be guilty. Now, enough of that nonsense: you are charged with stealing a watch; prove that you are innocent." Now, if the

prisoner is guilty, it must be difficult for him to prove that he is innocent ; but, for that matter, if he is innocent, it may be just as difficult. If the first comer were to accuse me of having stolen his umbrella a few days ago, I could more easily say that I was innocent than prove it. "So you persist in your denial," says the examining judge to the French prisoner ; "very well, I will send you back to your prison. I hope that next time I send for you you will have reflected, and discovered that the best way to serve your own interests is to make a full confession." Now this is evading the law, which says that a man arrested shall, the day after his arrest, appear before a judge. The letter of the law is carried out, but not the spirit ; for no examination takes place, and very often no sworn evidence exists. The prisoner goes back to jail, and the magistrate begins to get up the case against him. If the accusation is of a serious character, the man is placed *au secret*, that is to say, that not only he cannot communicate with his friends, much less see them, but he cannot even see his counsel or receive any legal advice. How long is he to remain in preliminary imprisonment before being sent to a tribunal ? This entirely depends on the good pleasure of the examining magistrate, who is allowed by the law to keep him a year under examination. If at the end of the year the case is not sent for trial, the prisoner is discharged. I

should, however, hasten to add that, as a rule, for an ordinary theft, or an offense that does not require long investigation, the accused undergoes *only* from two to six months' preliminary imprisonment before he is brought before his judges. During that time he is brought once or twice a month to the *Palais de Justice*, to be asked by the judge if "he still persist in his denial." These visits to the examining judge are most dreaded by French prisoners, especially in Paris. They sometimes have six, eight hours to wait for their turn, in a little dungeon six feet square, where they get neither food nor air. It is nothing short of torture, this inquisitorial examination in private. When in the evening the prisoner sees his cell again, it must look to him like paradise compared to the hole he had to creep into during the day. At last, one day he receives intimation that his trial will take place.

But, now, mark well where the system is wrong. The prosecuting magistrates, called the *magistrature debout* (because they prosecute *standing*), and the judging magistrates, called the *magistrature assise* (because they try cases in a *sitting* position), belong to the same set. Indeed, the prosecuting magistrates are in time promoted to be sitting magistrates. The prosecution is not, therefore, independent as the defence is. The prisoner's case is settled before he appears in court ; for both prose-



cuting and sitting magistrates have held a consultation over it, and the speech of the prosecution is merely delivered for form's sake.

The bench of the *Police Correctionnelle* is composed of three judges, so that at least one may be listening when the other two are asleep. These men have power to award as much as five years' imprisonment and five years' police supervision. Nothing is more prosy than the proceedings of this court of justice, unless some waggish prisoner be bent on enlivening them by exhibiting his wit in his answers. The following pass of arms is still fresh in the memory of the Paris'ans.

"Prisoner," said the presiding judge one day, "you say you are not guilty of robbing the prosecutor; but he will produce three witnesses who saw you in the act of snatching his watch from his person."

"Three! Is that all, M. le Président? Why, I could produce thousands who didn't."

I remember one man who was accused of stealing geese. Although plucked by the prisoner, the prosecutor maintained he had recognized them as his own.

"From their consumptive appearance, I suppose!" exclaimed the prisoner, who, in France, can always speak at his trial. "And how is it you heard nothing when I stole them? You ought

to know that geese will make a noise when interfered with. Why, M. le Président, the prosecutor seems to be a most ignorant man. If he had read his Roman history, he would know that the geese woke up the Romans one morning by their noise, and warned them of the approach of the Gauls."

The scholarship of the prisoner was not appreciated by the magistrates, who gave him three months' imprisonment. I was present in the room, and I remember that the prisoner, as he was removed, exclaimed, "The magistrates are as ignorant as the prosecutor!"

One of the most frequent customers of the *Police Correctionnelle* is the vagrant. In France, a man is taken up for having no recognized means of subsistence. The first time he is convicted of vagrancy he is sentenced to three months' imprisonment. When he comes out of prison he may have five or six francs in his pocket, if he has been industrious. His position is precisely the same as it was before he went in, except that he is now a man who has been to prison, and therefore work, if he be ever so anxious to get it, is not so easy to obtain. He fails to find employment, of course, and his five or six francs are soon exhausted; in a few days he is taken up again.

I quite appreciate the answer once given by a fellow who was for the second time charged with vagrancy :

"What are your means of subsistence?" asked the presiding judge.

"Why, I have lived on them," answered the prisoner.

This second time, besides a term of six months' imprisonment, the accused has to undergo from two to five years' police supervision, which means that he must report himself once a week at the police-station. Considering that, by law, Paris and the five or six largest towns of France are closed to him, it would be just as well, and much more human, to give him transportation for life at once. How is he likely to get employment in a town where he is seen paying his weekly visit to the police-station? In the large cities he might have had a chance. When society, in the name of the law, deprives a man of his liberty, it undertakes to provide him with the necessities of life; but if it discharges him from prison, telling him he must provide for himself, and at the same time imposes constraints upon him which make it practically impossible for him to earn an honest living, what is the consequence? Vagrancy brings a condemnation and police supervision; police supervision brings impossibility to obtain work; impossibility to obtain work brings vagrancy. This is the vicious circle in which he is virtually enclosed.

It must be owned that the disgrace which attaches to a man who has forfeited his honor is

quire just in itself : it is but an element of social order. As a collective individual, society should arm itself against the dangers that menace its peace ; but its severities should be intelligent, and it should be careful to distinguish between the man who has expiated his fault, and wishes to begin afresh to try and earn an honest livelihood, and he who shows no sign of repentance nor desire of improvement. Prisoners may be divided into two classes : those who wish to do well, and those who mean to continue in the path of criminality. These latter society can but abandon to their fate ; but the others should have a helping hand extended to them to set them on their feet. They should be helped to obtain work, not be mercilessly cast out. The problem to be solved is how to provide means for society to judge between these two classes of offenders. In America, prisoners are constantly visited in their cells by people who cheer them up and provide them with work when they come out. In France, the only visit they receive is from the chaplain, who exhorts them to pray to St. Joseph.

If the proceedings of the *Police Correctionnelle* are dull and prosy, those of the Court of Assizes offer a different sight. We are now in a perfect theater. Nothing is wanting but stage-boxes, and the division of the seats into stalls and galleries.

The prisoner himself often forgets his awful position, and thinks of the public who gaze at him. He feels like a sort of hero, the actor in whom the interest of the grand spectacular drama concentrates. Ladies of the highest society flock to the court, duly provided with scent-bottles and extra pocket-handkerchiefs. If, as is the case in France nine times out of ten, a woman is the cause of the prisoner's terrible position, they expect sensational scenes that would draw at the Porte St. Martin Theater, and they are seldom disappointed. At last a little bell is rung. All are silent and breathless. The accused, accompanied by two gendarmes, enters the court, and sits on a high bench, well in view of everybody. Then come the three judges, with their scarlet gowns, followed by the advocate-general, or public prosecutor. All take their seats solemnly. The performance is about to begin.

"Prisoner at the bar," says the presiding judge, "stand up, and give me your name and surname." Then the examination of the accused by the judge begins. I cannot help thinking that the French are right in examining the prisoner before the jury. The French eye is remarkably quick to detect expression, and it seldom fails to understand the movement of the muscles of the face. Emerson said he knew an experienced counsel, who once said to him that he never feared the effect upon a

jury of a lawyer who did not believe in his heart that his client ought to have a verdict. Faces never lie. Truth tyrannizes over the unwilling parts of the body. No man need be deceived who will study the changes of expression. When a man speaks the truth, in the spirit of truth, his eye is clear and steady. When he lies, his eye is dim and muddy, and sometimes asquint. When the prisoner's examination is over, the proceedings continue, as in England, with the evidence of the witnesses, the speech of the public prosecutor, and the speech of the counsel for the defense. For the last few years the summing up of the presiding judge has been done away with ; and a good thing too, for this summing-up used to be a second speech for the prosecution. Now the jury retire to consider their verdict. In all cases, from murder to assault, from forgery to ordinary theft, the jury have to answer the two following questions : 1. Is the prisoner guilty of the crime he is charged with? 2. Are there extenuating circumstances? Take murder, for instance. The law itself makes no distinction between the man who has committed murder in a moment of passion, or jealousy, and the cold assassin who has long premeditated the death of his victim to satisfy the basest of cravings : but humanity does. A French jury will always award "extenuating circumstances" to a prisoner who may be supposed to

have committed murder under the influence of love, jealousy, revenge, or despair—love especially. They will not uncommonly acquit a man, if his character is otherwise irreproachable, who has killed an unfaithful wife or her lover. Besides, the idea of capital punishment is abhorrent to the French ; and the jury will always try to find extenuating circumstances to avoid sending a fellow-creature to the guillotine. And even when their consciences will not allow them to find these extenuating circumstances, they fondly cling to the hope that the President of the Republic will commute the sentence of death to one of penal servitude for life. No wonder that there should be relatively so few executions in France ; and no wonder that, when one takes place, there should be a little excitement over it. If the French executed criminals as freely as some of their neighbors do, they would in time get used to it and make no fuss about it, and would thus save some foreign reporters the trouble of sending to their newspapers sensational accounts of “ Exciting Scenes at the Scaffold.”

To turn to less somber subjects, I should like to say a word or two upon a kind of imprisonment that the Republic has almost entirely done away with—I mean the imprisonment for press offenses. Under the Empire, Republican journalists often

got several months imprisonment for writing violent articles against the Emperor or his Ministers. There was really nothing very terrible about these condemnations except the name of the thing. At the prison of Ste. Pélagie special quarters were reserved for such delinquents, and they were tolerably comfortable quarters, too. It is true, the prisoner's door was locked at night by some one else on the outside instead of by himself on the inside; but that was almost the only thing that could recall to him his position. All day long he was free to receive friends from the outer world. One would arrive with the latest literary sensation, another with the foundation of a good lunch, and a right merry time was spent. When nothing more exciting offered, No. 8 could call on No. 7 in his room, and beguile the hours with a chat or the composition of a newspaper article. The Director himself would call and see that *Ces messieurs* were happy and comfortable. The amusing part of the business was that the populace imagined these poor journalists to be languishing on damp straw, and living on bread and water, for fighting their battles. When the prisoner came out, he was a hero to be worshiped, and his sojourn at Ste. Pélagie often led to promotion and sometimes to a seat in the House of Deputies. If it did not procure him this honor, it was a powerful testimonial in case he ever needed another journalistic post. He was always



proud to add at the foot of his list of recommendations, "Have suffered three months' imprisonment at Ste. Pélagie."

Press offences were tried in a certain department of the Paris Correctional Police Court, called the Sixth Chamber, and Republican journalists had this name on the brain. One day a journalist friend of mine, in search of apartments for himself and his wife, entered a house where some were to let. He applied to the *concierge*, who showed him over the place :

"You see," said the *concierge*, "there is a drawing-room, a dining-room, three bedrooms."

"Well," said my friend, "that makes five rooms."

"Oh ! but besides," added the man, with a smile, "we have a sixth chamber—"

That *concierge* must have wondered for a long time why the journalist took to his heels so suddenly.

## CHAPTER VII.

## THE FRENCH IN ENGLAND.

Why the French do not Emigrate.—English Hospitality to Foreigners.—Political Events in France.—The French Colony in England.—The Pioneers of this Colony.—French Clubs and Societies.—Some Frenchmen I have met in England.—The Typical "Mossoo."—His Qualities.—His Knowledge of English and of England.—Anglo-maniacs.—Anglophobists.—A Communist in Trouble.—Cooking a Remunerative Profession.—The Teachers of the French Language.

A FRENCHMAN out of France is very much like a fish out of water.

Of all the European people, the French are those who emigrate the least. Their country is large and rich enough to feed them and give them employment, the family ties are very close, the ambition for great wealth seldom exists, and they prefer living on a snug little income in France to acquiring a large fortune abroad. Not one boy is brought up with a view to being sent abroad when he is grown up. Most Frenchmen whom you meet settled out of France are men whose career was blighted by the political events of the last thirty or forty years.

Since England gave hospitable shelter to the crowd of poor Huguenots who, hounded out of their own country after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685, came and settled in Spitalfields, and created the silk-weaving industry of England this country has seen many an inrush of French fugitives into her borders. The chief were those that took place after the *coup d'état* of 1851, and after the overthrow of the Commune in 1871. At the present time there is no country where so many Frenchmen are to be found as England. Indeed, you find now over thirty thousand Frenchmen settled in this country, and the number is increasing every day. This colony is not only important by its number, but it is laborious and well-united; and the English need not begrudge them the hospitality they receive, for they are most useful members of the community. In twelve years (from 1874 to 1886) only two Frenchmen were condemned for acts of dishonesty committed in England, and one of these two was only a passing visitor. A good many years ago the French residing in England did not know each other, and, for that matter, did not much care to make acquaintance. Alas! it was but a poor recommendation for a Frenchman to say that he was residing in England, and if he knocked at the door of the French Embassy, and mentioned that he was French, that was enough; the door was

shut in his face. It must be admitted that in those days England had no reason to be particularly proud of many of her French residents ; but things have greatly altered since then. Victor Hugo, Louis Blanc, Alphonse Esquiros, came and settled on these hospitable shores in the early part of the year 1852. With them came a host of industrious and learned men, such as Charles Cassal, ex-member of the Representative Assembly of 1848, who was soon appointed to the professorship of French at the London University ; Theodore Karcher, one of the leading journalists of France, who was for thirty years professor of French at the Royal Military Academy ; Valentin, the famous prefect of Strasburg, whose prowess during the siege of that town by the Prussians is still engraven on the memory of the French ; Nadaud, Tallandier, and many others. To these men, or, rather, to their memory—for most of them are gone now—we French residents in England owe a great debt of gratitude. They taught the English respect for France, and the French respect for England. They raised the teaching of the French language in this country from a makeshift to a profession, and helped, by their writings, to make the people of the two countries understand each other better. They were the real engineers of the Channel Tunnel, as I once heard the late Lord Houghton call them.

Besides the French Benevolent Society and the French Hospital, there are now in London and in the provinces many French clubs and associations, which prove that the French in England no longer shun one another's company, but, on the contrary, seek it.

In these clubs and societies, where the French can be seen at home as it were, their characteristics come out in full light; gayety and good-fellowship reign, but tempered—if one may say so—by the little national failings, jealousy, and yearning after elective titles. These societies, we see, are subdivided into sections, committees, commissions, etc., each having a president, a vice president, a treasurer, a *secrétaire-rapporteur*, a *secrétaire-archiviste*, and what not. For that matter, you will never see half a dozen Frenchmen meet round a table for the discussion of anything but a good dinner without appointing one of their number president, another vice-president, etc. Each one must have a title; and if there are six members, and only five titles to be dispensed, the one who is left out sends in his resignation, and goes about abusing the other five. It seems up to now as if the Republic had failed to make the French people real Republicans. We are destitute of the first requisites of a republican—respect and obedience to elected governors, and deference to the voice of the the majority. Universal suffrage may be absurd

(I think it is) ; but having chosen to establish it, we should abide by its decisions, whether they concern the government of a society or of the nation. I am afraid it is our misfortune to have made a republic before we had made republicans of ourselves. However this may be, the French societies in England are doing good work, especially the Society of French Teachers, whose aim is to improve the teaching of French in England and to help honorable and intelligent compatriots.

Now, something about Frenchmen you may come across in England.

You will meet a type of Frenchman who, after residing ten, fifteen, twenty years in England, cannot speak English. He is proud of it, and sometimes wonders that, with so many Frenchmen in England, the English do not all speak French by this time. But he will tell you that the English have no aptitude for languages. Although he has lived five years in the same apartments, could you believe that his landlady still compels him to give his orders in English? He receives his paper from France every day, and avoids reading an English one. Why should he try to perfect his knowledge of the English language? He knows he speaks it badly, but he assures you that you require very few words to make yourself understood of the people. This worthy Frenchman carries his patriot-

ism to the extent of buying all his clothing in France. He would not for the world invest in a cravat or a pair of gloves of English manufacture. He declares it impossible to wear English garments, and almost impossible to wear out French ones. Besides, he does not see why he should not give his country the benefit of some of the guineas he has picked up over here. Like every child of France, he has the love of fine linen, and, in his opinion, the article is only to be found on the other side of the Channel. So he goes about in his narrow-brimmed hat and turndown collar, fastened low in the neck, and finished off with a tiny black tie, a large expanse of shirt-front, and boots with high heels and pointed toes. He holds his head high, is always smiling and happy-looking. As he goes along the street he hears people whisper, "There's a Frenchman!" But far from objecting to that he rather likes it, and I admire him for it. He likes the English, and recognizes their solid qualities; but as he possesses many of his own, he keeps to his native stock, and never tries to imitate the Englishman either in his habit or his dress. If his English vocabulary is of the most limited, his knowledge of England is still more so. He will tell you solemnly that the eldest sons of the peers of this realm are baronets, and represent in the House of Commons the boroughs that their fathers represent in the House of Lords. One of this type,

and a London correspondent of a Parisian paper, once wrote to his editor that "Lord Salisbury yesterday kissed the Queen's hands on his appointment as leader of her Majesty's Opposition." Another remarked that English boys are more respectful to their fathers than French ones, and, to prove it, he added, "In the English upper classes the son invariably calls his father *governor*, a word which is pronounced *guv'nor*." If the dear fellow speaks bad English, he will never admit that there are in England a good many Frenchmen who write and speak very good English.

"Now, look here," I once said to a worthy compatriot who, in spite of a twenty years' residence in England, still horribly murders the mother-tongue of Shakespeare, "surely you will own that our friend and compatriot So-and-So speaks English very well."

"*Mon cher ami*," he quietly replied, "he speaks it like the rest of us, of course."

This man is to be admired for having succeeded in remaining perfectly French after such a long residence in England. He shows his patriotism by sending his guinea to all the French benevolent societies in England, and by helping his struggling compatriots whenever he has a chance. Wherever the tricolor floats he is of the party. After his dinner you will see him sipping a cup of coffee at the Café Royal, and on fine Sundays you will be



sure to meet him at Hampton Court, Kew Gardens, or Richmond Park.

Then there is the Frenchman whose great ambition is to be thought English. He frequents only English people, gives his fellow-countrymen a wide berth, and has not a good word to say for them. I am inclined to think that his slurs against his countrymen cannot be appreciated by his English friends, for my experience of the English tells me that their own admiration for England makes them respect a Frenchman for remaining French. Needless to say that this specimen is a nob. He would fain make you believe that all his spare time is spent in the country-houses and the yachts of wealthy or titled English friends. His conversation is full of the "splendid shooting we have just had at Lord So-and-So's place," or the "delightful cruise we had in the North Sea in Sir John's yacht last August." He never says "the English do this or do that"; but his language bristles with such expressions as, "*we* should never stand that in England," or, "as *we* say in English." What would he not give to be able to go a little further and say, "*we* English?" He pushes his English get-up so far as to wear whiskers and shave his upper lip and chin, and not for the world would he be betrayed into a shrug of the shoulders. I am happy to say that his name is not legion.

A Frenchman not very uncommonly met with in England is the Anglophobist. He hates the very name of English. Needless to add that the man is a social failure, a *raté*, as we neatly call the specimen in French. If, by intelligence, industry, and perseverance, he had tried to build up an honorable and lucrative position for himself in England, he would probably be able to say a good word for the land of his adoption. Of course he will not lay his poverty at his own door; he prefers spending his time in running down his more successful compatriots, and throwing the blame upon England and abusing her for not having found out his hidden merits. It never occurs to him that it was his duty to study this country and her people, and that England is not to be blamed for not having studied him and changed her ways to accommodate him. Ask him what he thinks of England. Good heavens! you will hear him say something; he calls the men all fools and knaves (perhaps he has read Carlyle), the women all guys. It is true that the cabs are swifter in London than in Paris, "but who cares to drive so fast?" He will never fail to let you know that, if he were in France, he would occupy a position worthy of his attainments. I never met this man without thinking of the Irishman who, complaining of the price of fresh eggs in England, remarked that in Oireland he could get two fresh eggs for a

penny, but when asked why he had not stayed in such a land of plenty was fain to reply, "Sure, but it's in Oireland I hadn't the penny."

I have no doubt it would do this type of gentleman good to take a leaf out of the book of a brave fellow whom I was once shown in a fashionable French restaurant in the West End washing glasses. This plucky Frenchman had taken to glass-washing, for which he earned a shilling a night and his dinner, *en attendant* something more suited to his acquirements and requirements. Like many others, he had fled his country because he had held a post under the Commune, and was "wanted" by M. Thiers. If he had the traditional half-crown in his pocket by the time he reached England, it was as much as he could boast in hard cash, and so he bravely accepted the work I saw him at. I was not surprised to learn some time ago that he is now manager and partner of one of the large French houses of business established for the sale of French manufactured goods in England.

If you go to the Café Royal in Regent Street between twelve and one, you may almost every day see, seated at one of the tables, a tall, thin, gentlemanly Frenchman of about fifty, enjoying the excellent cookery of that establishment. This is no less a personage than the first cook in London. It is said that he makes an income of over £2000

a year. He is attached to no house. This is how he earns a living. In his own brougham he sets out toward evening for the house of some rich man who is going to give a dinner at which every dish must be above criticism. Here he alights, and, making for the kitchen, goes through the process of tasting all the soups, sauces, and made dishes, advising, when his palate suggests, a little more salt here, a pinch of herbs there, a dash of sugar in this *entrée*, a suspicion of onion in the *salmis*, etc. This done, he pockets his fee of two guineas, and drives on to the next dinner-giving patron who has bidden him to his feast in this strange fashion. His nightly list comprises many houses all through the London season.

The employment pursued by a very large number of French residents in England is of course that of teaching their own language. Here and there you may find among these workers a few ex-cooks who, taking advantage of the free-trade principles on which education is carried on in England, have set to work at a profession for which they are unfitted. These earn for their *confrères*, as a class, a poor reputation. But, as a matter of fact, these unqualified teachers are very few, and their number diminishes every day. The main body are men of high education, as well as unflagging industry and patience—many scholars who would be men of note at home. I have in my

mind's eye one who charms his readers with the poetry that has earned him the title of Laureate of the Provincial Academy of France ; another, whose philological attainments made him a valued *collaborateur* of Littré ; another, now dead, who was first leader-writer on the staff of the *République Française*, and a frequent contributor to the London *Spectator*. In fact, they are too numerous to mention, those hard workers who, out of school hours, get through an amount of brain-work which would seem incredible to many who have not been eye-witnesses of their indomitable energy.

## CHAPTER IX.

## THE FRENCH AND THEIR CRITICS.

Why so Little is Known of the French by Foreigners.—Modern French Literature.—The French are a Home-loving People.—Narrowness of the French.—Braggarts of Vice.—Each Fellow wants every other Fellow to believe that he is a Devil of a Fellow.—Provincial Life in France.—The French are the Happiest People in the World.—French Couples.—The Frenchman's Aim in Life.

THERE is no country about which foreigners talk so much, or know so little, as France.

With the exception of Mr. Hamerton's, I do not know of any foreigner's writings on home-life in France that are worth the paper they are written on.

This gentleman has not confined his attention to Paris, but by going into the country, living with the French people a thoroughly French life, and casting aside his Anglo-Saxon prejudices (if he had any), he has succeeded in getting a real knowledge of the nation.

That looking at Paris, and calling it France, is the great mistake which most of our would-be critics make.

This was perhaps never more forcibly illustrated than on Sunday, the 29th of January, 1888, from the pulpit in the Brooklyn Tabernacle.

"Show me the dress of a people, and I will tell you what their morals are," exclaimed the famous Rev. Dr. Talmage.

As it was evident from what had gone before, that the reverend doctor was going to speak of France, a vision of my country-people rose to my mind's eye. I thought of the industrious, orderly, virtuous, sober, thrifty millions: the men in their always suitable clothing, never aping that of the class above; the women in their simple costumes, which, whether those of the picturesque Boulogne or Granville fishwives, the peasants of Normandy, Brittany, Burgundy, Picardy, Champagne, or the South, are always models of neatness, simplicity, and suitability, from the crown of the picturesque cap to the sole of the strong, sensible shoe. I then remembered the trim little seamstress, milliner, dressmaker, or shopgirl, in her natty dress, brightened up by a pretty bonnet on Sunday, but never decked with cheap imitations of what her employers wear.

There was a grand illustration of the point the reverend doctor wanted to make.

Did he use it? Not he!

Passing over the great country and the people who should represent France, he goes to Paris—a

cosmopolitan town, where the good or bad tastes of visitors, ay, and even their vices, are catered to—and calling its inhabitants *The French*, he proceeded to censure them, and lamented that their eccentricities in dress should be followed by the women of other countries. He passed over the fact that, in the best Parisian society, when a lady's street-dress calls forth the highest admiration, that admiration is invariably expressed by such words as: "How exquisitely simple!"

Was not this a fine opportunity the doctor neglected of giving a hint to his countrywomen?

When, copied in vile stuff and unartistic colors by clumsy fingers, the creations of Parisian milliners reappear all over the world, they are often eccentric enough, I admit—another form of French as she is "traduced"—and it is no wonder that reverend doctors are found to frown on them; they shock none more than the French themselves.

After all, I suppose it is little wonder that outsiders should know so little of the French. French life is so, so exclusive! The passing visitor to our shores gets no opportunity to judge of his host's real character. As a nation we are not hospitable, I am sorry to say. A stranger will meet with politeness and attention as he travels through our country, everybody will help him, and if he appears in Paris armed with letters of introduction, he will

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be made welcome at social gatherings: parties may be given in his honor perhaps; but, go where he may throughout the country, he will not have a chance of penetrating into the inner family-circle. The home-life of the bulk of the people will remain a closed letter for him.

On the other hand, modern literature is of little or no use in the case either, for most of our novelists do not describe every-day life. They describe the exception. A picture of middle-class life—that is to say, the existence by the largest part of the community—is too peaceful, uneventful, hum-drum if you will, to attract the novel-writer or to please the novel-reader. Our manners debar him from drawing scenes from the birth and growth of the love that ends in matrimony—romance only begins after the marriage ceremony is over—and the French novelist turns too often to the portrayal of illicit love.

Because he does so is no reason for inferring that this kind of love is more common in France than elsewhere. A Balzac may charm with pictures of commonplace people and their doing; but to the ordinary novel-writing pen a moving tale of passion is a necessity. So, rare examples of unholy passion are seized upon as groundwork for much French fiction, and the foreigner reads and exclaims:

“This is a picture of French life!”

But it is not.

The foreigner runs away with the idea that he knows us ; but he does not, and his criticisms on us, of which he is so lavish, are worthless.

The best critics France has had have been Frenchmen. It is to them that we must turn for true portraits of the French.

Some people may think that it is impossible for a man not to be partial in judging of his countrymen. But look at Thackeray's case : have John Bull's weaknesses and peculiarities ever been more faithfully portrayed than by the great English satirist ? Did his being English blind him to their faults ? Could any one but an Englishman have written *The Book of Snobs* ? Love for his country did not prevent Thackeray from being able to hit off to the life the foibles of his countrymen. Quite the contrary ; for I maintain that the first requisite in a sound critic is sympathy with his subject.

But to return to our foreign critics.

I was not greatly surprised, on coming to America, to hear that home-life hardly existed in France. I had heard that before. And the overpowering reason advanced to prove this statement was that time-honored Anglo-Saxon "chestnut": The French language has no equivalent for the English word *home*.

How glib is the criticism of the ignorant !

To feel the whole meaning of those sweet words *chez soi, chez nous*, one must know the language they form part of. They call up in French hearts all the tender feelings evoked by the word *home* in the Anglo-Saxon breast.

How many English or American people have an inkling of their value ?

Do they care to know, that some hundred years back, the French used to say *en chez* (from the Latin *in casa*, at home), and that the word *chez* was a noun ? That, later on, they took to adding a pronoun, saying, for example, *en chez nous* ; and that the people, mistaking the word *chez* for a preposition, because it was always followed by a noun or a pronoun, suppressed the *en*, so that now the French language has lost a noun for *home*, but has kept a word *chez* which, to this very day, has all its significance ? What an idea of snugness, happiness, is conveyed by the little sentence *Restons chez nous* on the lips of a young couple, though their *chez nous* may but represent the most modest of abodes ! What a delightful title *chez nous* would be for a little volume containing sketches of the life of a happy married couple !

Home-life unknown in France ! Why, the mistake is one of the most glaring ever made. There is no more home-loving, home-abiding creature on earth than the Frenchman.

Not fond of home, those people who emigrate

the least ; who when they do emigrate, return to their beloved corner of the world as soon as they have enough to keep their family ? I say they are most home-loving, taking the word in its narrow as well as its wide significance. The French home is so precious a possession that the outsider is often jealously excluded from it. It is a sanctum into which none but the nearest and dearest are allowed to freely penetrate. A Frenchman's home is so dear to him that he rarely sighs for travel. Take even the world-famed giddy Parisian, fond of novelty and movement. How he loves his Paris ! You may go and see the Alps, if you like ; he is quite content with his Buttes-Chaumont. He is the most philosophical and easily amused man on earth. You may spend a week in seasickness on the Atlantic to get a sight of Niagara Falls. "It aint worth it," he says, and he prefers his dear little cascade in the Bois de Boulogne, surrounded by the pleasant associations of his youth ; and though his home may be a little flat on the fifth floor of a Parisian house, it is just as dear to him as an ancestral mansion is to an Englishman.

The very narrowness of the French is the result of their contentment with home ; for they are narrow, it must be admitted, provincial to the highest degree. They cannot understand that, outside France, life can be worth living. They take very little interest in what is going on outside their

country. The French newspapers are almost purely devoted to French news ; the doings and sayings of Prince von Bismarck may have an exceptional interest for them, but three or four lines are as much as the papers will generally devote to the account of a ministerial crisis or the formation of a new cabinet in England. The result of a presidential election in America will be announced in a couple of lines, with no comments following. I guarantee, so great is there absorption in their own affairs, that if you asked the first hundred men you met in France the name of the President of the United States, not more than two or three would be able to tell you. Again, take the instance of books. A volume bearing on its title-page, "Translated from the English, or the German," would almost be certain to be a dead failure. With the exception of Walter Scott and Charles Dickens, English literature is practically unknown outside literary circles. I need not say that my remarks on France in this article refer to that great middle class of *bourgeois*, the bulk of the nation.

Yes, the French are essentially home-loving. And their morality, so often impugned by ignorant critics, who find it easier to repeat idle nonsense than to study for themselves, will bear favorable comparison with that of any nation, including the look-how-good-I-am Great Britain. Of this I am convinced from the depths of my soul.

But we are happy, and care not a jot what impression we make. You will never hear a Frenchman ask a foreigner: "Now what do you think of us?"

We never trouble to show our best side to the foreigner. This is what misleads completely so many outsiders. In France, the vice that there is, is on the surface for every one to see. It is all open to every looker-on: there is very little hidden. What there is, that you see. No slightest effort is made to hide defects. In comes the Englishman or the American, and forgetting the carefully hidden vice which exists, and with a vengeance, in his own great towns, cries out upon the immorality of Paris. I will go so far as to say that, in France, there is not even so much vice as there appears to be.

Let me explain myself.

Far from attempting to hide our faults, we, as a matter of fact, often make show of those we have not. The Frenchman is the braggart of vice. If you say to an Englishman: "I know you are a virtuous man," he will think you only give him his due. If you were to pay the same compliment to a Frenchman, he would resent it. Like the Anglomaniacs, represented in that charming American comedy by Mr. Bronson Howard, *The Henrietta*, "each fellow," in France, "wants every

other fellow to believe that he is a devil of a fellow—but he isn't."

The small jokes that a Frenchman will go in for may be ridiculous in your eyes, and, worse than that, they may, and often do, earn him the reputation of a reprobate. But, when you get a chance, look beneath that boasting exterior, look at the man in his family relations, follow him to his home—Ah! there comes the rub: his home is closed to you, and you cannot easily know what a devoted husband, what a loving son, what a doting father, is this same man who is so fond of posing in public as a "jolly dog."

Reduced to literature for a means of knowing something of the real French character read, then, those French writers who portray the home-life of the people (for, after all we have a few who do), not those who build up extravagant tales of passion, from the materials every nation will afford to those who go in for sensational novels. Would you judge the English people by the works of "Ouida" or Miss Rhoda Broughton? Take rather the writers who, with only the uneventful lives of ordinary French people as material, have succeeded in giving to the world the most charming novels. For delightful pictures of high life, go to Gustave Droz and Octave Feuillet. Read Cherbuliez and Edmond About. If you would know what brave, honest folk our peasantry are, turn to

Erckmann-Chatrian. These are the really popular authors in France. My own conviction is that the objectionable books published in France are more patronized by foreigners than by the French themselves ; for I seldom come across, among my French friends, a man who has read them. M. Zola's books are read, I admit, but not for the same reason as they are read in England. Here they sell as objectionable books ; in France they sell as the works of a transcendent artist. We read Zola's too often repulsive details for the sake of the masterly genius displayed in the handling. Nobody, I imagine, reads Shakespeare or the Bible for the sake of many filthy passages. None the less every man of taste regrets the prostitution of such a genius as Zola's to such an unworthy cause.

An undergraduate was complaining to me one day that no good French modern novel could be obtained at Oxford. "All we can find in the French department of our booksellers," he said, "are the works of M. Zola. There are piles of *La Terre*."

"Well, my dear sir," I interrupted, "does it not strike you that booksellers are tradesmen, and that they of course keep the articles that are wanted ? If there was no demand for *La Terre*, there would be no supply, and you would not see piles of the book."

The manager of a great French bookselling firm in London told me once that his firm alone had re-



ceived orders for more than ten thousand copies of *La Terre* in England.

I don't wish to get up a case against the English people. Judge for yourselves : I have stated facts.

To return to the French. Again, take the case of M. Georges Ohnet. Why did his *Maître de Forge* run through more than 250 editions? Because it hit the public taste, I imagine. It is the most successful novel of the century ; it is the novel that every French man and woman has read, and it does not contain an objectionable line.

I assert that, to those who will look at us without bias, we must appear in our true light the happiest and most home-loving people among modern nations.

That provincial life in France is narrow, I have admitted ; but what a very dove-cote is almost every little home ! If the time to be happy is now, and the way to be so is to make all those around us happy, then we are the most enviable people on earth, for we put that theory into practice. In what other land will you find so many households whose members are of three or four generations? Parents and children cling together to the exclusion of all the world outside. Not one boy is brought up with a view to earning a livelihood out of France. The thought of the young birds leaving the nest is dreaded. I know girls who have refused splendid offers of marriage and preferred humbler

ones, because the latter gave them a chance of living near Papa and Mamma, and parents who have put themselves to any amount of inconvenience to make room for daughters-in-law rather than part with their sons. The Grévys, the Hugos, the De Lesseps, these are only examples of the great bent of the hearts of a French family to beat as one. A French father would think you mad if you told him that you left your family at seven in the morning to return to them at seven or eight in the evening, as so many Americans do ; and that on Sunday, your only day at home, you were too exhausted to enjoy your children's prattle or to take a walk with your wife. The little French provincial tradesman, who locks his shop-door from half-past twelve to half-past one, so as not to be bothered by customers, while he spends a joyful hour at dinner with his family, has come nearer solving the problem of happiness than the Anglo-Saxon jockey in the race for ducats.

The Frenchman's wife and children are his adoration. The former is his friend and confidante, who thoroughly enters into his aims and aspirations, and knows to a franc the amount of his account in the bank. The latter are rays of sunshine which brighten his daily life more than any gold could ever do. Rich in the love and *camaraderie* of his dear ones, and in the things which he knows how to do without, he clings to his home and country,

and gets the full enjoyment out of the blessings that Heaven sends him ; but has no desire to grasp more than his share, and sighs not after wealth.

Oh ! that his critics would look more at his qualities which are great, and less at his defects which are infinitesimal compared with them, and which, for the most part, are but the exaggeration of them.

What is his narrowness but the outgrowth of his love of home ? What is his overdone interest in women but the outgrowth of his warmth of heart ?

Look at his foremost place in the ranks of art, science, and literature ; look at his magnanimity in conquest, bravery in danger, pluck in adversity. Look at the world's work done by him. He is prouder of his Pasteur than of the great Napoleon, not because he has saved the silkworm industry of France and Italy from destruction, and taught the French wine-makers to quickly mature their wine ; not because he has effected an enormous improvement and economy in the manufacture of beer, and has rescued the cattle of Europe from the peculiarly fatal disease of anthrax ; not because he has conquered that horrible monster Rabies ; but because the great *savant* has shown his perfect disinterestedness by offering his services as a free gift to his native country, and indeed to all mankind.

No home-life in France ! Not home-loving,

those families where the mothers are goddesses of economy and order, and the fathers idolizing children! Not home-loving, that Frenchman whose aim in life is, as I have said elsewhere, to give a good education to his sons, and a good *dot* to his daughters; to see them happily married, and keep them near him after their marriage; to bring up his grandchildren, guide their first tottering steps, indulge them, spoil them, make companions of them, launch them in life, and see them all assembled around his death-bed!

I have lived many years in England; I have traveled a great deal in Europe and in America. The day on which I meet a more happy, home-loving couple than my countryman Jacques Bonhomme and his dear wife—then, I will let you know.



A FRENCHMAN, YET NOT A  
FRENCHMAN.



A FRENCHMAN,  
YET NOT A FRENCHMAN.

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THE natives of Old Auvergne are French, but, before all, they are Auvergnats.

There is an old story told of a score of witnesses being once called from Auvergne to give evidence at a great trial in Paris. When they arrived, the clerk of the court asked how many of the party were men and how many women. They replied in chorus, "*Ni hommes, ni femmes, tous Auvergnats.*"

The Auvergnat rises at four in the morning and goes to bed at eight in the evening. He is the strongest and the healthiest son of fair France.

The strong stuff his throat is made of allows him to speak that hard, guttural language peculiar to his province, which savants have studied and classed as *charabia*, and to gulp down prodigious draughts of any liqueur; that is, any liqueur you may be pleased to treat him to, for he rarely parts with the value in cash of any of the little indulgences of life.



Reared in the mountain air of a province where the doctor is the most hard-up member of the community, the Auvergnat goes to Paris young, and takes up any employment that requires strength and patience.

It is he who carries your trunks to the station, goes on errands about the town, polishes your floors, blacks boots at the corners of the streets, stands at the Pont-Neuf in all weathers to shear long-haired dogs, mounts the endless stairs of Parisian houses with pails of water and sacks of coal. I believe he has never been known to yield to the charms of a wheelbarrow, and the hand-cart has no fascination for him. As for a horse or a donkey, he never dreams of calling in any such aid to his own broad shoulders.

The Auvergnat almost invariably makes a fortune; that is to say, he always manages to get together enough to retire to his own village and end his days in comfort.

I never heard of an Auvergnat, in any station of life, being bankrupt or borrowing of a friend—I do not say “of a compatriot”—for, like the Ant in La Fontaine’s fable, the Auvergnat is no lender.

He earns little, but spends less, and is an adept in the art of turning *sous* into *francs*, and *francs* into *louis*.

He loves his dear Auvergne, and his aim is to

carry home all his earnings in the capital for the profit of his native village. Every *sou* he spends in Paris seems to him like a robbery from the land of his birth, so he only lays out his coin on strict necessities.

If need be, he can breakfast off a piece of bread and an onion. His daily life is cleared of all the superfluities possible, and he works on happy in the thought of returning one day to his beloved Auvergne.

He never becomes Parisianized. He was born an Auvergnat; he is, and will always remain, an Auvergnat. In his estimation, Paris cannot compare with his native village, the Cathedral of Notre Dame falls far short of his own little church in his eyes, and his buxom Catharine has far more charms than the most charming Parisienne.

His purse is of leather, with the opening protected by a long string of the same material. It takes five minutes to open this kind of purse—an excellent precaution which gives time to reflect. A giddy expenditure is out of the question. The Auvergnat, in the act of untying this cord, is as unhappy-looking a creature as you could well meet with. But see him smile as he pockets his well-earned pence, and you will admire the deft rapidity of the operation.

The Auvergnat's strong point is strength. He

is not intelligent, or, I should rather say, his intelligence is not developed.

He earns his bread, and makes his little hoard *sou* by *sou* at labors that tire out his body and leave him only just the intelligence to add every evening the pence of to-day to the francs of yesterday. Practice has made him an adept at addition—he never made a mistake in a figure. He knows to a farthing the amount of his little fortune, and his money-box is as a glittering star ever before his eyes cheering him at his toil.

Those are the happiest moments of his day that he spends calculating the difference between the sum that he has scraped together and the one that he reckons will allow him to go home to Auvergne and “plant his cabbages.”

And the day he began work in the great city, when he held in his hand the fee for the first load of wood he had carried, or the first pair of boots he had blacked, he said to himself—I say to “himself,” because the Auvergnat is taciturn, and it is always to himself alone that he confides his projects for the future—“Two sous less to earn before I can go home.”

According to statistics, which I have under my eyes, the Auvergnat is the most honest Frenchman. He will toil as hard as you please for money; but scheme for it, never. It is the rarest thing to find him figuring in a police-court for a disloyal action.

All he asks his neighbor for is honest wage for honest work.

You may almost know him by his fashion of walking with eyes bent on the ground, so as not to miss the occasion of picking up anything lying in his path. Old nails, pins, bits of wood or coal, he has a use for any little nothing he may find. He despises none. That which is of no service to him for his personal wants he turns an honest penny by; whatever he can use he keeps by him to save buying. It would take a very sharp pair of eyes to find anything lying about where an Auvergnat had passed. But if the honest fellow found a jewel or a well-filled purse, I guarantee that he would go out of his way to take it straight to the nearest *commissaire de police*. Those finds are quite outside his lawful pickings.

The property of others is sacred for him. When he comes to wax your floor you need not lock your drawers and cupboards, and you may leave your plate about with impunity. I remember one worthy fellow, who had blacked my boots one day on the Boulevards, running after me to tell me that I had given him a half-franc piece by mistake, and insisting on only keeping two sous, the usual price for his work. I had no small change and I was in a hurry, but it was all I could do to persuade him to keep that which, to use his words, he had not earned.

The Auvergnat has a heart as warm as any man's; Cupid submits him to his laws. But let me hasten to say that he loves but once a week—on Sundays; love was never known to interfere with a day's work in his week.

He quenches his amorous flame in the bosom of some good, warm-hearted cook, who repays his attentions with such substantial ones as a basin of broth, a glass of wine, or any little delicacy that may be looking lonely in the larder.

The good fellow is a trifle obstinate, but plain-spoken and trustworthy. Has he traced himself a plan of existence? Nothing will make him give it up. So plain-spoken is he that he makes but a very poor domestic servant. You would never get him to say "Not at home" to a visiting bore. He would go and fetch his mistress's chignon, to prove to you that she is not "visible." He would leave your service immediately if he found he had to forego strict truth to please you.

He has no humor.

The type of the plain-spoken Auvergnat has been admirably put on the stage by M. Labiche, the witty and prolific dramatic author, in his vaudeville *Le Misanthrope et l'Auvergnat*, the latter character not being in the least exaggerated, but a true photograph from nature.

The children of this thrifty race swarm in Paris. You find them in all ranks, but especially at the foot of the social ladder. They are all successful, as I have already said. Frugality and perseverance united are qualities which have never failed to crown their possessors with success. He is the living illustration of the rule laid down by the most eminent political economists, that the lower the working-man's wages (if steady, of course) are, the more thrifty and happy he is.

Those who attain a high position retain their simple manners, and will speak *charabia* in the family-circle.

Those who remain in the lower walks of life tenderly cling to their beloved *patois*, which, though it grates on our ears, appears to flow from their hardy throats with extraordinary facility.

A happy home is his when he returns to his native village. His independence is unbounded ; and if, as I said, he is no lender, it must be said in his excuse that never has he been a borrower.

This race is a truly privileged one. The Auvergnat has preserved the primitive vigor of his physique intact ; and when he gets the advantages of education, his intellect proves to be as sound and vigorous as his body.



## JOHN BULL ON THE CONTINENT.





## JOHN BULL ON THE CONTINENT.

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### I.—RESIDENT.

ON the maps published in Great Britain you may notice large slices of the earth's surface marked in red.

~~These~~ represent the British possessions.

But there are a good many other British possessions which are not marked in red. Some of them are in France, where numbers of our most delightful and picturesque towns—such as Avranches, in Normandy ; Dinan, Dinard, and St. Servan, in Brittany ; Pau, in the Pyrenees, etc., are inhabited by a regular English Colony.

On entering these places, the signs of English colonization will strike you : the English church, the lawn-tennis ground, and the cricket field, will announce to you that John Bull has taken up his abode there. The Union Jack does not float over the Town Hall, it is true ; but you are pretty sure, before you have gone very far, to see it flying from the summit of a house inhabited by some titled

member of the community. You will not have been many days in the town before you are presented with evangelical tracts, either handed to you in the street, or quietly slipped under your front-door. John never forgets that he has received a mission to convert his benighted fellow-creatures ; and, in return for the pleasure of the blessed sunlight on a foreign shore, he does his best to give the poor foreigner the light of the Gospel from the pure fount of foggy England.

These British colonies are chiefly recruited from the upper middle class of their mother-country : Irish landlords whose rent-rolls have shrunk, officers on half pay, unlucky speculators, and victims of the turf or *écarté*.

They are all people who cannot keep their wonted position in a society where they are judged by the length of their purse, and where poverty is a crime. "To dig they are ashamed"; all kinds of work are derogatory in their eyes, and the only thing to be done is to make the most of what is left to them. So, quietly they slip across the British Channel, and pitch their tents in our fair land, where, thanks be, it is still possible to live well and cheaply.

To any inquisitive friends it is easy enough to explain why they are in France. "Our English climate is atrocious, you know ; my lungs were getting affected, Here I am reviving. Besides, I want the children to speak French ; and the only

way to get the accent at all is to come and live over here."

That is not all. "Life in London is awfully wearing, you know. Here I shall enjoy complete rest. Everybody has his hobby. Well, mine is to rusticate philosophically, *à la* Rousseau. Ah! my dear fellow, Jean Jacques was right—the simple pleasures of life, that kind of thing, don't you know!" John Bull will tell you, as he enlarges on the subject of a country life and a diet of dairy produce and vegetables: "I haven't felt a touch of dyspepsia since we came over."

It would be a wonder if he had.

"And the shooting and fishing are really capital, to say nothing of the primitive habits of the Breton, who is quite an interesting subject of study."

The good man tells the story so often, that in the process of humbugging his friends, he finishes by humbugging himself, and by and by believes it is all true.

The advantages of the move are manifold. In London, the society man must dress three times a day. In these places, he does as he pleases, and that is one of the great charms of life in a little French town. The inhabitants do not know him—no need to dress for them. His compatriots, voluntary exiles like himself, do know him—no need to dress for them.

Wherefore, behold, John's get-up is a compromise between former grandeur and present poverty. He affects corduroy and flannel. The knickerbockers and jacket of the former look sportsmanlike, and are everlasting wear ; the flannel shirt is comfortable, and shortens the washing bill. The said knickerbockers may be patched, but they have a shooting-pocket ; and though he has one meal a day less than he could easily manage, he has a shooting license.

These Britishers are clannish ; they associate only among themselves, unless, indeed, it be among the French aristocracy of the town and neighborhood. The chief qualification to be a member of their set is to do nothing. I know one case of an Englishman having been discovered to have accepted an agency from some English firm, in order to allow his family to live a little better. He was piteously "boycotted" as a black sheep.

Yet, these worthy folks are kind-hearted. The poorest of them are often charitable. Not to be able to give to the poor would have been the hardest privation resulting from their reduced state. At Christmas, at any rate, they must permit themselves the luxury of regaling some of the poor old folks of the neighborhood. Dear, funny, lovable snobs ! They may have been taught to despise work, they may have their whims and fads : but, at the core, there is much that is sweet and wholesome

in them, and few of their acts need be repudiated by the nicest gentleman. I remember once going to an English church with one of those self-banished Britons. When the collection-bag came round, he dropped in a *son*, which he had pulled out of his pocket in mistake for a franc. There were probably very few coins in that pocket of his ; at all events, before it was time to leave he had discovered his mistake, and before we left he had rectified it, taking the trouble to go all round the church to find the person who had carried the bag.

These people, plenty of whom have had luxurious homes in England, are fain to content themselves with a little, poorly furnished house, for which they pay forty or fifty francs a month. Are there no carpets on the floor, they console themselves with the thought of the dust those luxuries are apt to harbor. Is there little furniture in the drawing-room, they think of the overcrowded *salons* in South Kensington, and are almost ready to look upon the possibility of free movement as a blessing cheap at the price.

Thanks to the inborn talent English women have for making their houses pretty, the plain furniture is soon supplemented by a hundred knick-knacks, and the aspect of the place is far from being uninviting. I have seen some of these houses, with poverty plainly staring out from garret to ground-floor, yet looking pretty, thanks to the women who

lived in them. Their own drawings, and a few good photographs, elegantly framed, brightened the walls, and drapery, cheap, but gracefully embroidered and looped about the windows, doors, and fireplace, gave a certain appearance of elegance to rooms that had been bare and ugly without them. Cheerful cretonne coverings hid the faded chairs, and plump pillows made the hard, straight sofa more inviting than it had ever looked before. It was not luxury, far from it; it was, alas! hardly comfort; but it was good taste. One felt among people of refinement.

If, in the room dignified by the name of library, there are only one or two bookcases, and they have their glass doors discreetly lined to hide the scarcity of books, and the presence of a cigar-box filled with penny productions from the French Government manufactories, and also, maybe, a whisky bottle, the little fraud is a harmless one, pathetic rather than amusing.

Let us not begrudge this poor, shabby, honorable gentleman, who keeps up such a brave face to the world and pretends he enjoys his enforced cheese-paring; let us not begrudge him that hour with his cigar and his "toddy"; it is his one little solace in an existence as bare as the bookshelves.

Ay, the whole thing is pathetic: the dining-table, with its wealth of hedge-flowers and dearth of beef and mutton.

Perhaps it is lunch time, and there is fruit and cheese for all fare ; or, it may be, the family are at dinner, and the master is carefully helping the trout he caught this morning, or dissecting a hare, with a due regard to to-morrow's *croquettes*. There, behind his chair, stands the good Breton servant who waits on them, doing her best to keep from smiling at the solemnity with which *ces Anglais* eat.

By and by, in the drawing-room, friends will drop in, and all will play at life in Belgravia and Mayfair. The society papers come from London regularly every week, and supply the conversation with topics. You hear the little scandals of the day in London commented upon, to a running accompaniment of "You don't say so!" "Who would have thought it?" etc. The latest boudoir secrets and London club gossip are told with many a "This is *entre nous*, you know"; or, "I shouldn't like it to be repeated; no, not for the world, you understand." To hear them, you would imagine they were all intimate friends of every member of the Guelph family resident in England. They speak of the Prince and Princess of Wales as they would of their next-door neighbor, and nobody is worth mentioning who is not at least a baronet.

These English people are all staunch Conservatives.



Now and then there is a little farewell gathering. Some one has died over there in England, and some one here is the better off for it. And then there are sad little partings, and wistful eyes watch the departure of the lucky fellow who is going back to resume his place in the delightful whirl of London life, while the rest must rusticate and rust until a similar piece of luck befalls them.

Poor, reduced John Bull! The sun never sets on his dominions, it is true; but his own particular star is not in the ascendent yet. So he goes on playing his little comedy, though everybody sees through it; gets what consolation he may out of the society of his companions in exile, and the local nobility who are kind enough to open their houses to him and "put him up" at their club. The *bourgeois* calls him "goddam," but has a lurking respect for him. The shopkeeper overcharges him; but those English people have the reputation of flitting with as little ceremony as the rooks, and those of them who pay must pay for those who do not.

"*Que voulez-vous?*" On the whole, it is not such a bad life," says John to himself, "and the children are picking up the accent wonderfully."

## II.—TOURIST.

It has been asked by M. Labiche, in *Le Voyage de M. Perrichon* (a play worthy of Molière), why the French, who are so witty at home, are so stupid abroad.

Perhaps I am only furnishing an example of this peculiar effect of frontier crossing in asking the following question : How is it that the English, who are so kind, amiable, considerate, and unaffected at home, are so rude, overbearing, and inconsiderate abroad ? It is a question that I have often asked myself as I looked at certain Britons taking their holiday rambles on my native shore.

I am fain to come to the conclusion that a man out of his country is for a time not his own self. To be seen at his best, he must have the setting of his natural surroundings. First along, he is like a fish out of water making great efforts to go on swimming naturally, but unable to use its tail gracefully and becomingly, for want of its natural element. The English, residing on the Continent, have found their feet, as it were ; they have learned the language of their adopted country, and, having made themselves a new home, have an object in being pleased with it.

But the wandering Briton is like the rest of us : he sets out from home with the firm conviction

that he is leaving the most wonderful country in the world. He perhaps starts with the idea that everybody admits it. He has probably not gone far in his travels before he sees that he may have reason to modify that opinion. But he does not enjoy the idea much; it would be wounding to his natural vanity, to say the least of it. Why not put on a little bluster, and pretend to see nothing very remarkably fine? It is much more comfortable to say: "Ah, yes; that scenery's not half bad, really; but, you know I think these things have been awfully overpraised. These old churches, no doubt, are very fine, most of them; but it's wonderful how sick one gets of them when one has seen a dozen or so." Having taken up this course, he is prepared to stand quite unmoved in presence of the grandest Alpine sunrise, or Vesuvius lighting up the midnight sky.

There is another thing that goes sadly against his grain, and rubs him up the wrong way. He finds that his French, that used to sound so nice at home when he occasionally aired a little quotation, is apt to raise a smile to the lips of the natives. You must not imagine that he blames himself, or that it ever occurs to him that he is the worst linguist in the world. Oh, no! He simply wonders why those confounded foreigners can't learn English, puts on a disgusted look, and takes to giving his orders in a tone of bored contempt, particularly

exasperating to the recipients of them. His hat seems to grow to his head, he lounges in the best seats at the theater in his tweed suit, and succeeds in making himself generally disagreeable as well as conspicuous. One of his most objectionable tricks is that of going sniffing about, as if everything smelt ill. At home, he has carried his sanitarian hobby to a very mania, and he seems terribly afraid there is typhoid fever lurking in every corner of every building he enters. All these little matters, added to his calm way of making himself at home, as if all the world belonged to him, are necessarily trying to the foreigner.

Under the second Empire, John Bull's little peculiarities were lumped under the head of "insular eccentricities." Only the better-class people of England traveled on the Continent in those days ; they were rich, and spent their money freely, seldom even taking the trouble to look at their bills. If they hurt the susceptibilities of the natives, the latter found English gold a tolerable balm for the wounds, and further solaced themselves with caricaturing John Bull to their heart's content.

But the times have changed : John is no longer the good guinea-pig that he was. The enterprising Mr. Cook has arisen with his "personally conducted" tours, and been followed by many imi-

tators, all anxious to give you the maximum of sight-seeing at the minimum of cost.

At first these firms were only patronized by the city clerk class. Unable to speak foreign languages, but anxious to make the most of his annual fortnight's holiday, the clerk put himself under the care of one of those lightning conductors, who, for a consideration of eight or ten pounds, lodged him, fed him, spoke for him, and whirled him through Europe in less time than it takes to see London tolerably.

But now, people who would not think of going with this flock of gapers, purchase Cook's coupons and obtain hotel accommodation in any foreign town for about two-thirds of the usual cost. The Continent is overrun with English tourists, whose object is to do the thing cheaply.

The French hotel-keeper of to-day keeps his smiles and his best bow for the Americans and the Russians, and shows his disapproval of the Cookists by sending them to his top floors, scarcely an enjoyable elevation in a land where the elevator is as yet a rare luxury.

Poor fellow ! is it any wonder if, finding that he is not wanted, he takes his little revenge by shutting his eyes to all that is admirable, and doing his best to confirm in his mind all the absurd prejudices he set out with ?

How he has managed this, you may find out if

you care to question him on his return as to what he has seen.

Has he passed a day or two among the treasures of Cluny or the Gobelins? Has he done more than walk through the Louvre? Has he made acquaintance with the Sorbonne and the College of France and what goes on there? Has he ever been, on a Sunday, in some of the churches, and seen for himself that French churches are not, like the English ones, full only from eleven to half-past twelve, but thronged from six o'clock in the morning to one in the afternoon by a crowd whose fervor is second to that of no other church-goers? Oh, dear, no! Catch John in a church on the Continent.

Then where has he passed his time?

Look over his shoulder the first time he writes a letter to an intimate friend on arriving at home:

"Dear Boy: I have just returned from the Continent. I will postpone giving you details until we meet in private. All I can say now is that I thank God I was born an Englishman."



FROM MY LETTER-BOX.





## FROM MY LETTER-BOX.

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EVERY author who has enjoyed a few hours of popularity has seen his letter-box overflow with letters, anonymous or signed, which the publication of his books has called forth.

These literary effusions, like the articles and reviews in newspapers, are from critics of all shades, fair and unfair, kind and unkind, stupid and intelligent.

The author may refuse to take note of, or even resolve not to hear, what his critics say ; but the chorus breaks out afresh on the appearance of each new work he gives to the world, and happy is he who can listen unmoved, and profit by it or laugh over it, as the case may demand.

Great, high-strung natures there have been, like George Eliot, whose fine ears could not endure the bewildering trumpeting—exquisite porcelain vases, that could scarce stand handling, much less kicks. Thomas Carlyle, himself a philosopher, once called the *Saturday Review* critics “dirty puppies.”

He who goes out into the public streets must expect a splash of mud now and then, and well for

him if his broadcloth is not too fine : the spot dries, and—one fillip—it is gone.

“Criticism,” says D’Alembert, “should be received, if fair and kind, with deference and thanks ; if fair but unkind, with deference and no thanks ; if unfair and unkind, with silence and contempt.”

So much for criticism, public and private : that’s how I take it.

Undoubtedly the most entertaining critics are the private ones, I mean if you be of a philosophic turn of mind. The contents of your crammed letter-box will afford you many an hour’s genuine amusement. Your unknown correspondents have all sat down to write to you in real earnest, that is the first thing which strikes you ; and whatever your after-sentiments may be, the first is a feeling of gratification at having called forth the interest of so many.

One corrects misstatements. Another calls your attention to a printer’s error. Another points out something that you have omitted to speak about, or suggests a subject for your next book.

One addresses you as “most noble and illustrious,” and asks for your autograph ; the next (a social failure) puts a damper on your vanity with four pages of gross insults—probably his way of avenging himself on Fate for the bad treatment he has received at her hands. Another—but extracts from some of the epistles that my own publications have called forth will best illustrate the subject,

and I cannot do better than open my desk at once. So far from despising these letters, I keep most of them carefully and use them as wholesome physic, and occasionally take a dose of flattery or abuse, according as my state of depression or self-complacency may seem to require.

*A tout seigneur tout honneur.* I will begin by introducing the anonymous fanatic who modestly signs: *A true Christian.*

"SIR: It is wonderful that you should remain in England to write and abuse her people just to please the French and fill your pockets. I have read your *John Bull and His Island*. It is a pack of lies from beginning to end. Joanna Southcott was a true prophetess, and no other than the woman of the desert spoken of by St. John in the Book of Revelations. Most of her prophecies have been fulfilled already, and no doubt the rest will be fulfilled all in God's good time. Beware of bringing down the anger of the Almighty on the sins of jeering and lying. Rest assured that you will cut but a very poor figure on the day of her resurrection."

Much in the same vein is the correspondent, wholly destitute of humor, who supplies the following:

"You have sneered at all we hold most sacred. We English are the chosen people of God, the lost tribes of Israel. You will be able to ascertain this for yourself, if you will take the trouble of

reading the book which I send you by this post. I am only ashamed that a respectable firm of English publishers should have been found ready to lend themselves to the publication of such wickedness. I have no doubt you are preparing another book. Be careful what you say next time."

The next letter I find in the heap is written on the vilest paper. The ink is pale and rusty, the pen scratchy. In his furious hurry to relieve himself of his venom, the writer has caught his pen in the paper and covered it with a shower of little blots. For some time he hesitated as to whether he would post it or not; from its crumpled state it is even plain that he was on the point of throwing it on the fire, but passion got the better of reason, and the production found its way into my letter-box.

"SIR: I have read your last book. I should not have imagined that it was possible to write anything more stupid than *John Bull et son Ile*. You have disappointed me; you have surpassed yourself. I sincerely hope you are emptied now. When I see all the French and English papers devoting columns of praise to your trash, I cannot help asking myself, 'What is the world coming to?' There are hundreds of Frenchmen residing in England who could have written much better books on the same subject, if the idea had only occurred to them."

The letter is in French, and the postmark London. Here there can be no mistake about the social position of the correspondent: a Frenchman vegetating in London.

Another amiable compatriot is the one who sent me the following:

"It is said that your books bring you a hundred thousand francs a year. If such be the case, let me tell you that it is simply shameful that you should keep your professorship at St. Paul's, instead of resigning it and making room for one of the many Frenchmen in London who are as well fitted for the post as you are, and perhaps a great deal better."

Strange that I should have resigned my professorship the very day I received this letter! Perhaps my worthy correspondent has boasted of bringing about my resignation. It was not *he*, however, who replaced me.

Now, I should like to dwell on this letter just for a minute.

This communication is not only from a compatriot, but evidently from a *confrère*. The writing is disguised, and it would not surprise me to learn that it had come from a former friend. Why should he write thus? It would be hard to say. But it is a curious fact that individuals who have risen rapidly into any desirable position have always been the objects of such attentions as this from old associates. These people are persuaded that their suc-

cessful friend wants to turn his back on them, but in reality it is they who have changed. They were his warmly appreciative audience when he had no public one; but let the public once sound his praises at all loudly, and they are immediately seized with a desire to rush out into the highways and proclaim that he is only plain "Jack," and not the "John" that his admirers think him—that other "John" whom Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes was too modest to mention.

But let us return to the letter-box.

A Briton, who was not satisfied with my portraits of the John Bull family, wrote from London:

"Your books on England are extremely clever and amusing, but they are as full of blunders as eggs are of meat."

This kind correspondent, with his experience of London eggs, could not have paid me a more witty or graceful compliment.

One day I found in my letter-box an epistle, the envelope of which was addressed to "John Bull, Esq., Cornhill, London, E. C." A postoffice wag had written on the back in blue pencil:

"Not known. Try Max O'Rell."

An anonymous wit supplied the following to my collection:

"You say that Englishmen have not the bump of amativeness, and that you never saw them pay to

their wives those little attentions that are known in France by the name of *marivaudage* and in England by that of 'spooning.' But, my dear sir, does it not strike you that perhaps those provoking Britons waited until you had left their houses to proceed to business?"

This one "has" me, I will readily admit; but wait a minute, I am going to have my revenge, for the next correspondent is a lady who corrects a misstatement in *John Bull and his Island*.

"SIR: You say in your book that a society for the protection of women has not yet been formed in London. Allow me to say that you are mistaken. Such a society has been in existence for many years, and its seat is at 85 Strand."

So, after all, there existed in London a Society for the Protection of Women. Well, I was glad to hear it. And it has existed for years. Has it? You may easily imagine how little surprised I was the other day when, opening my English paper, I read that a magistrate in London had not hesitated to impose a fine of ten shillings upon a brute of a husband who had nearly smashed his wife's skull with a pair of tongs. I congratulate the Society for the Protection of Women, which can inspire the magistrates of the big city with such terror. After so severe an example, few husbands will feel inclined to open their wives' skulls for the mere purpose of ascertaining what there is inside of them. I heartily



tender my most humble apologies to the Society for the Protection of Women.

Here is a batch of four. I hesitate to which to give the palm. Each is a rich illustration of the *sang-froid* and *sans gêne* to be found in a certain type of Anglo-Saxon person all over the world.

The first bears the postmark of the city of Dallas (Texas).

"MY DEAR SIR: I have an album containing the photographs of many well-known people from Europe as well as from America. I should much like to add yours to the number. If you will send it to me, I will send you mine and that of my wife in return."

This was a tempting offer.

Another American correspondent writes :

"DEAR SIR: Please to send me your autograph. I enclose a ten cent piece. The postage will cost you five cents. Don't trouble about sending the change."

Well, after all, I said to myself, it is not everybody's signature that will fetch two-pence half-penny in the market.

The next illustrates the coolness of John Bull's head : that coolness which, in England, goes by the name of "cheek."

Judge for yourself.

"DEAR SIR,—I am a great admirer of your books, and I should consider it a great favor if you would

be kind enough to send me a copy of each of them with your autograph. Hoping I am not presuming too much, I am, yours very truly, G. R."

No other enclosure.

Well, well, my dear, kind correspondent, I really cannot help thinking that it is presuming a little too much, and I must decline to give you a helping hand in putting into execution the plan you have discovered for getting up a library on the cheap.

To my mind, however, the fourth of this batch beats the other three into fits. Here it is in its delicious simplicity :

" I have heard that you were a most obliging man, and therefore I trust you will pardon the liberty I take. I should be grateful if, at your convenience, you would kindly write out for me : (1) The etymology of the following French words : *aube*, *jour*, *soir*, and *veillée* ; (2) The French equivalents for the two following English sentences : ' I am at my wits' end,' and ' to turn over a new leaf ' ; (3) Biographical sketches of Alphonse Daudet, Octave Feuillet, Emile Zola, and Georges Ohnet. With apologies for encroaching upon your valuable time, I am," etc.

There was not even a stamped envelope accompanying this modest request. After reading it again, I felt much inclined to break through my rule of never answering unknown correspondents. The glib request seemed to come from an old offen-

der ; I was certainly not the first who had been called upon to supplement his school education in this fashion. It was a great temptation to suggest one or two "new leaves" he might turn over with advantage, and keep turned.

I pass over several kinds of correspondents : those who simply ask for autographs or a sensible picce of information ; those who "thank you for the pleasure they have derived from the perusal of your books," and hope "you may long be spared to show up the weaknesses of John Bull and make his virtues known to the world" ; the Frenchman residing in England who sends a request for cash, saying that "it is a duty for compatriots on a foreign shore to help one another, and that the loan of a few pounds would be particularly acceptable just now"—and who sometimes adds, "surely you can afford it, you lucky beggar."

Now *place aux dames*.

The ladies are certainly the most piquant of my correspondents, and I get a good deal of amusement in speculating on their age, state, temper, station in life, etc. Here are a few samples of this kind of correspondence :

An anxious mother writes :

"I have eight daughters. What would you advise me to do with them?"

Excuse me, dear madam ! I am a married man,

and I can only advise you to apply elsewhere for relief. But how old are your daughters? If they are still in pinafores, there is the system of plain diet and early hours, pursued with success, I believe, by our old nursery acquaintance who lived in a shoe. But perhaps my first surmise was the correct one, and, having many marriageable daughters, you are at a loss to know why men are not besieging your house for wives. Now, dear madam, let me ask you one or two questions. Have you judiciously trained your eight daughters? Have you been careful to have them taught all the *o'logies*, the higher branches of science, the piano, and a smattering of half-a-dozen accomplishments? Have you carefully shielded their sensitive natures from all knowledge of the degrading trivialities of house-keeping? Have you duly inculcated in them a contempt for anything but the best style of dress, carriages, furniture, etc., and a ladylike indifference to the cost of the necessities of life? You have done all this? Well, poor madam, I am afraid I cannot do anything for you.

“Mrs. John Bull” writes the following indictment against her husband:

“I feel very grateful to you for the admirable way in which you have shown up the true position of women in our country. Every Englishwoman ought to read your book, *Les Filles de John Bull*.

My husband was very averse to my doing so ; but I read it all the same, and am very glad that I did. At last we have some one among us with wit to perceive that the life which a woman leads with the ordinary beer-drinking, cigar-smoking English husband is little better than that of an Eastern slave. Take my own case, which is that of thousands in our land. I belong to my lord and master body and soul ; the duties of a housekeeper, upper-nurse, and governess are required of me ; I am expected to be always at home at my husband's beck and call. It is true that he feeds me, and that for his own glorification he provides me with handsome clothing. It is true, also, that he does not beat me. For this I ought, of course, to be properly grateful ; but I often think of what you say on the wife and servant question, and wonder how many of us would like to share the cook's privilege of being able to give warning to leave. We have heard enough about the duty of training girls to be good wives and mothers. It is high time now that we should hear something about training boys to be decent husbands and tolerable fathers. Under the present system of education, they are taught from their cradles to despise girls as their inferiors ; and the result is the semi-slavery of English wives which you have so ably depicted."

I am afraid, my dear Mrs. John Bull, that you are rather hard on your husband. No doubt, he

thinks you such an ornament to his house that he cannot bear to know you outside it. Looked at properly, it may be taken as a delicate compliment. As for his expecting you to wear a smiling face, you must own that when a fellow comes home from a public dinner, or a jolly evening at his club, it is devilish hard upon him to find his wife with a long face, suffering from a fit of the blues.

A lady, signing herself "A Neglected Wife," pours out her little troubles to me in a long letter, complaining that she has to spend nearly all her evenings alone, while her husband is dining, drinking, and card-playing at his club, and concludes by saying: "I had the reputation of being a good-tempered girl; but the life I have to lead now would sour an angel." This poor little woman had better beware how she shows sourness at her husband's coming home at one o'clock in the morning, or he will soon make the discovery that he comes home at one o'clock *because* she is sour. Men have powerful reasoning minds.

The next letter is a model of neatness and precision. The writing is bold and angular; so is the style. There is a perfume of the woman's-righter about the missive, which runs thus:

"Monsieur: You say that 'when men do not marry, it is for want of an inclination'; but that 'when women do not marry, it is for want of an invitation.' Allow me to tell you that you have

indulged in wit at the expense of truth : you are entirely mistaken as to a woman's reason. I myself have had several offers ; but, thanks be, the ample means left me by careful parents have placed me above the necessity of getting a living in the mill of matrimony. Man is a beast, a sensual and selfish creature, utterly incapable of understanding the sensitive, refined soul of a true woman ; and I am happy to say that I am one of the many who mean to do without his companionship."

Few bachelors, I imagine, will regret to hear of this lady's determination.

A lively British girl writes :

"Several young friends and myself have been speculating as to what you are like—whether you are young or old, plain or good-looking, tall or short, married or single. We scarcely dare hope that you will satisfy our curiosity by replying to this letter ; but if you have a photograph of yourself to spare, it would settle our minds greatly."

I hardly see how my photograph would tell whether I am tall or short, married or single ; and, reflecting that photographs are apt to be faithful reproductions of one's features, I prefer not to send mine to these young ladies, who have perhaps enshrined me in their imaginations as an Adonis.

Other ladies, more bold, send their love—two or three even send kisses ; but, alas ! by post.

Now to turn from the ladies.

A Frenchman from Paris suggests a little business :

"Monsieur and dear Confrère : I am a man of most fertile imagination. I have scores of plots which, worked by you in your inimitable style, would produce no end of absorbing novels. There is a fortune for us both if you will only join me. Please think it over seriously, and let me know your decision at your earliest convenience."

Declined with thanks.

One of the English publishers who applied to me for the right of issuing an English edition of *John Bull et Son Ile*, wrote me a letter which contained the following handsome offer :

"I believe that an English translation of the book you have just published in France would be likely to have a good sale in England. I am ready to give you £16 for the right of translation. An early answer will oblige."

Declined with thanks.

But, oh, if I could only have had such a brilliant offer from an American publisher ! From this quarter I never had any : they took French leave. I went so far as to write to one of the publishers who did me the honor of introducing me to the American public that I had heard he had published an edition of my book, and sug-



gested the sending of a little check by way of acknowledgment. As an inducement to him to comply with my request, I promised not to spend the money not even to cash the check. I had determined that, if ever I got that check, it should go into my scrap-book of literary curiosities. But the check never came. I will tell you, however, how I was lucky enough to make one pound by the transaction ; I had bet twenty-five francs with a friend that the check would never come.

A lady, signing "A Niece of Uncle Sam," wrote to me the following note from Boston :

"I have just read your book on English women. If I could not write better English than that, I would never think of sending my manuscript to a publisher."

You are quite right to abuse such English, my dear lady ; but you have sent your letter to the wrong man. You should have addressed it rather to the enterprising American publisher who, without a *by your leave* or *with your leave*, one night set thirty scribblers, all more or less ignorant of French, hacking away at my prose, with instructions to have the book done by next morning. It was done—done brown, as you have seen—much to the consternation of yours truly, I can assure you. This poor book, translated into English, read poor enough ; but translated into American !

Here is now an appeal to use my influence on behalf of the oppressed :

“DEAR SIR : There is an enormous sum of money in the English Court of Chancery to which I am entitled. I am constantly writing to the judges of that Court to claim my property, but can obtain no answer to any of my letters. It is very hard to live in poverty and want, and to know that I have riches belonging to me which I cannot handle. I appeal to you to use your influence to get my rightful property. I hope you will do what you can for me.”

A request to send my answer to Mrs. Dash, Insane Hospital, Indianapolis, threw much light on the strange epistle ; and I thought it wise, on the whole, not to trouble the judges of the Chancery Court.

Among the letters which have given me much pleasure, I select one signed with a name well known in diplomatic circles :

“What pleases me about your books on England is, that one has only to scrape away the sprinkling of sarcasm on the surface in order to come upon a true appreciation of John Bull’s solid qualities ; and he must be a very dull fellow the Englishman who does not laugh with you over his little weaknesses and eccentricities.”

Yes, thanks be, it is not only amusement that an author gets from his stranger correspondents.

Among his sweetest moments are those spent in the reading of letters from friends whose faces he has never seen and may never see. They speak of the pleasure, and sometimes the profit, their writers have had in reading him; and they are glowing with encouragement, thanks, and often kind and valuable hints. He would like to reply to every one of them: but it is out of his power to do this. Write again, dear unknown friends; help me with your kindly criticisms, encourage me with your discriminating praise: it is for such as you that the author would fain do better than his best.

What kind and graceful letters, for instance, did I receive from Englishmen some time ago, begging me to excuse, as a penalty of success, a certain book-trade speculation, purporting to be a reply to *John Bull et Son Ile*, but which was in reality a minute study of all the low and ill-famed resorts that its writer had visited in Paris, for the edification of his compatriots, of course—*en tout bien tout honneur*, you understand—and which he had presented to those compatriots as a picture of French life.

Here is an extract from one of these letters, signed by a clergyman:

“I have just read a low and scurrilous book, written anonymously, in alleged answer to your book. The object of my writing to you is to beg that you will not, for one moment, believe that this expresses the opinion of any one in England

whose opinion is worth a brass farthing. In the name of my countrymen, I apologize to you and to your compatriots for the appearance of this production."

But letters are not the only form in which criticism reaches an author through his letter-box.

There are the newspaper-cuttings posted to you by your publisher, and an occasional stray newspaper which a *kind friend* slips into the mail, in the hope that its slashing blows at your new-born may act as a wholesome corrective to your vanity.

First of all, let me introduce the critic who reviews books without reading them :

When my book *L'Ami MacDonald* appeared in Paris, a year or so ago, the London and Paris newspapers published extracts from it the following day. Shortly after, an ingenious critic, not coming across any mention of Mary Stuart among those extracts, ventured the opinion that "it was strange for a Frenchman to write a book on Scotland and not devote a few pages to the unfortunate queen." After a few other remarks equally astonishing, he gravely winds up with this delicious bit of unconscious humor :

"The volume is bright and entertaining : unfortunately, the author is *too apt to jump to hasty conclusions.*"

Is he indeed? But *you* are not; if, however, you had read the book, you would have seen a whole chapter devoted to the Queen of Scots.

This critic cannot touch a well-known New York wit, who, on being told by interviewers that my book *Jonathan and his Continent* had appeared, exclaimed: "The author has written a book on America without knowing his subject. But from what you say the book must be amusing, and *perhaps* I had better read it before I criticise it."

Now, just fancy! A book on America, by one who does not know it, criticised by one who has not read it.

Such are the humors of criticism.

The next will show that a little knowledge of French is not altogether out of place in a reviewer of French books. Here is actually a critic on the staff of that most honorable of papers, the *Saturday Review*, who does not know the meaning of the French expression *raison social*. He quotes a passage of mine, in which he comes across these two words, and turning up his nose at it, gives it up, saying: "Whatever this may mean." Surely it is a little too bad of this man to blame me for not bringing down my French to the level of his comprehension.

What is a poor French author to do? I tried to meet the difficulty, and suggested to my Paris publisher that it would be worth our while to sup-

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